HISTORY OF ENGLAND IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

VOL. V

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HISTORY OF ENGLAND

IN THE

EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

BY

WILLIAM EDWARD HARTPOLE LECKY

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HISTORY OF ENGLAND

IN THE

EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE year 1779 continued to present in England the same strange spectacle of an English ministry presided over by a statesman who believed its policy to be fundamentally wrong, who was again and again imploring the King to permit him to resign, and who again and again consented at the urgent wish of his sovereign to remain. The position of Lord North had long been morally untenable, and it became much worse in 1778, when he consented to accept from the King the office of Warden of the Cinque Ports, with an additional salary of 4,000*l.* a year.[1]

Ten years earlier Lord Holland had expressed a wish to see his old rival Chatham again at the head of affairs, because, as he said, he was almost the only man he had ever seen in power who had no tinge of the general and fatal fault of irresolution;[2] but in this

[1] See *Correspondence of George III. with Lord North*, ii. 193–195, 200. North, however, stated in 1779 that he believed the income of his Wardenship was really only about 1,000*l.* a year.—*Parl. Hist.* xx. 926.

[2] Fox's *Correspondence*, i. 58.

respect at least, the King was in no way inferior to Chatham. Nothing could be clearer than the lines of his policy; nothing could be more inflexible than the resolution with which he pursued them. Two closely connected objects were continually before him, and they governed every part of his policy. In the first place America must be subdued, or perhaps conciliated, but under no possible circumstances abandoned. If the colonies obtained independence, Canada, the West Indian islands and Ireland would follow their example. A great empire would dwindle into a small kingdom, and every element of its power would disappear. The moral which the King drew from all the troubles of the last ten years was that 'this country gains nothing by granting to her dependencies indulgence.'[1]

This opinion was no doubt held by many in England; it might be defended by serious arguments, and it would have been comparatively harmless had it not been accompanied in the mind of the King by the strongest and most passionate conviction that it was his right and his duty as an English sovereign to force his own personal opinion upon the country, whatever might be the view of his ministers, of the Parliament, or of the nation. It was for him, as he expressed it, to 'steer the bark.' 'No circumstances,' he said, 'shall ever compel me to be dictated to by opposition.' 'I thank God I am not made of materials, whatever difficulties may ever surround me, to stoop to that.' 'Nothing less will satisfy them than a total change of measures and men. To obtain their support I must deliver up my person, my principles, and my dominions into their hands.' Such a proposition 'totally destroys the only ground on which I can bring myself to accept the services of men of that

[1] *Correspondence of George III. with Lord North*, ii. 214, 253, 254, 258.

description.' 'Before I will ever hear of any man's readiness to come into office I will expect to see it signed under his hand that he is resolved to keep the empire entire, and that no troops shall be consequently withdrawn from America nor independence ever allowed.'[1] It was impossible in England to govern without the concurrence of Parliament, but 'this country will never regain a proper tone unless ministers, as in the reign of King William, will not mind being now and then in a minority.'[2] Every means must at the same time be taken to secure a permanent predominance of the Crown in Parliament, and to prevent that predominance from being impaired by any of the fluctuations of opinion. At a time when the enormous amount of corrupt influence at the disposal of the Crown was the master scandal of English public life, the King complained bitterly that some employments had been granted for life instead of during pleasure, and that the power of the Crown had in that way been weakened, and he announced his fixed intention to oppose this system during his whole reign.'[3] Lord North governed with a submission to the royal will unparalleled among prime ministers in modern English history; but yet the King seriously rebuked him for having on some occasions entered into plans of business or made arrangements of employments, without previously consulting his master.[4] Nor was the popular portion of the representative body neglected. The details of the secret management of the House of Commons under Lord North have not been disclosed, but the large sums given by the King at elections are fully proved. In one of his letters before a Middlesex election in 1779 he writes: 'If the Duke of Northumberland requires some gold

[1] *Correspondence of George III. with Lord North*, ii. 224, 225, 262, 269, 297, 298.

[2] Ibid. p. 228.

[3] Ibid. p. 193.

[4] Ibid. p. 200.

pills for the election, it would be wrong not to give him some assistance.'[1]

The conviction that it was essential to the security of the Empire to abandon the conquest of America, and to concentrate all the forces of England upon her foreign war, was growing both in the ministry, the Parliament, and the country. Lord North had clearly avowed it. Barrington, the Minister of War, at length, after persistent efforts, was allowed to resign, and was succeeded by Jenkinson, the former private secretary of Bute, who could always be trusted to act as a mere clerk fulfilling the directions of the King. Lord Suffolk, the Secretary of State for the Northern Department, had for some time wished to resign, but suffered himself to be over-persuaded. He died in office in March 1779, and was succeeded by Lord Hillsborough, 'whose American sentiments,' said the King, 'make him acceptable to me.'[2] Sandwich, who still presided over the navy, was bitterly unpopular, both in the profession and in the country, and fierce attacks were made against him on the ground of his mismanagement of the navy, and of his injustice to Keppel. Wedderburn, the Attorney-General, was restless and dubious, and was anxious to oblige the Chief Justice of Common Pleas to retire in order that he might obtain his place, but the King, who fully understood his character, quieted him by a promise of a peerage in addition to the first great office that fell vacant, if he continued to serve till then.[3] It was noticed that many of the country gentry, who had hitherto supported the ministry, abstained from voting, and when at last Spain declared war, the feeling that America must now be abandoned, and the English army

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[1] *Correspondence of George III. with Lord North*, ii. 286. See, too, pp. 422–427.

[2] Ibid. p. 244.

[3] Ibid. pp. 245, 250, 251.

recalled, rapidly spread. That event, wrote Fitzpatrick to Lord Ossory, produced nothing but a very general consternation, and a most universal acknowledgment of the necessity of changing the ministry.' 'All people see the necessity of withdrawing the troops from America.'[1]

The conduct of Spain had for some time been marked by an indecision which was the natural consequence of strong conflicting impulses. The close alliance of the two branches of the House of Bourbon, the desire of breaking down the naval ascendency of England, the irritation against England which was produced by the last war, by the disputes about the Manilla ransom and the Falkland Islands, and by some minor discussions relating to illicit commerce and territorial encroachments, and still more the prospect of regaining Gibraltar, Jamaica, and the Floridas, drew the Spaniards strongly towards war. On the other hand, there were no real or plausible grounds for declaring it, and there was not a little to be feared. Spain was an intensely monarchical country, and she had no wish to encourage republican ideas. She was the chief supporter of the system of commercial monopoly, to which the triumph of America was likely to give the deathblow, and being herself the possessor of vast colonial dominions in South America, she had every reason to dread the precedent of a successful colonial revolt. As early as December 1776, when Spain was engaged in a brief war with Portugal, the Americans asked for her alliance, and promised to assist in obtaining for her Pensacola, provided the United States had a free use of the harbour and a right of navigating on the Mississippi, and also to declare war against Portugal if that Power had, as was alleged, either refused to admit American vessels into

[1] *Correspondence of Fox*, i. 227, 223.

her ports or had confiscated any of them. Congress also promised to assist France and Spain in conquering the English Sugar isles;[1] but these overtures were not warmly responded to. Some secret assistance was given through hatred of England, but Charles III. and his minister, Florida Blanca, were both averse to war; the minister at least cordially detested and dreaded the independence of America, and it was entirely contrary to the wishes and counsels of Spain that France entered into alliance with the revolted colonies. From this time, however, and especially from the moment when it appeared that France was nearly balancing England on sea, the motives favourable to war became stronger. A proposal was made by Spain to mediate between England and France, and some long negotiations ensued, but they were probably only intended to gain time, while the preparations for war were being completed. In April 1779 a convention was signed between France and Spain, in which each Power stated the advantages it wished to acquire for itself, and in which, among other articles, it was stipulated that no peace should be concluded till Gibraltar was restored to Spain; and in June Spain declared war against England.[2]

Her later proceedings had been conducted with great secrecy or dissimulation, and the declaration of war appears to have been at that time wholly unexpected by the English ministers. Gibraltar was at

[1] American *Diplomatic Correspondence*, iii. 11.

[2] This history is told very fully in Bancroft, and the original correspondence relating to it will be found in Circourt's translation, tom. iii. In October 1778 the King had written to North, 'I have no doubt next spring Spain will join France;' but at the end of the following March his opinion was changed, and he wrote, 'I now begin to credit the supposition that the Court of Spain will not take part in the war.'—*Correspondence of George III. with Lord North*, ii. 209, 243.

once blockaded and besieged, and another powerful fleet was on the sea to act against England. The announcement of the declaration of Spain arrived shortly before the close of the parliamentary session, and a patriotic address was unanimously carried in the House of Commons pledging Parliament to give full assistance to the King in his struggle against the Americans. In the Upper House it met with some opposition, and in both Houses much time was expended in furious party recriminations, in attacks upon the ministry in general, and on Lord North in particular, which might well have been postponed till the crisis of an extreme national danger had passed; attacks which were especially brutal, because at that very time one of Lord North's sons was lying dead in his house.[1] A Bill was introduced for doubling the militia and authorising the enrolment of volunteer corps, but the former part of it was thrown out in the Lords. By another measure—which the extreme exigency of the situation alone could justify—the protections of those seamen who had previously been exempted from seizure by the press-gangs were suspended for five months. The measure had a retrospective effect, and it was introduced by Wedderburn late at night, and pushed through with extraordinary rapidity, in order that it might come into operation before those against whom it was directed could take measures to escape. The prevailing distrust of the Government in this moment of supreme danger, was clearly shown by the abstention of many of its habitual supporters, and it was probably fortunate for it that the session was near its close. The King, however, was as determined as ever. He peremptorily forbade any postponement of the prorogation. He assured Lord North, who again more than once tendered

[1] See the touching scene in *Parl. Hist.* xx. 926, 927.

his resignation, that such a step 'would be highly unbecoming at this hour,' and that by such 'a desertion' he would lose all the merit of his former conduct. He categorically stated, in the passage I have already cited, that he would admit no one to office who did not pledge himself in writing not to suffer the English troops to be withdrawn from America, and not under any circumstances to acknowledge her independence, and he expressed his firm belief that America would yet sue for pardon from the mother country.[1]

In the beginning of 1779, a French squadron had without difficulty taken the whole of the British forts, factories, and settlements along the river Gambia, at Senegal, and on other parts of the African coast, and had transported the artillery and garrison from the French island of Goree to Senegal, to strengthen it against attack. Goree was soon after seized by the English, but they made at this time no attempt to recover their own African settlements. In May, a French expedition was fitted out against Jersey, but it was driven back by the 78th Regiment and by the militia of the island, and shortly after Sir James Wallace, with great gallantry, burnt, in a bay upon the coast of Normandy, several vessels which were assembled for a renewed attack. The main French fleet, however, consisting of about twenty-eight ships of the line, succeeded on June 4 in leaving Brest Harbour without molestation; and, having twenty days later joined the Spanish fleet off Cape Finisterre, the combined fleet, amounting to at least sixty ships of the line, with a proportionate number of frigates, entered the English Channel in August, and for a time found nothing that could oppose it.[2] For the

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[1] *Correspondence of George III. with Lord North*, ii. 255–258, 261–264, 267.

[2] American *Diplomatic Correspondence*, ii. 255, 256.

first time since 1690, England saw a vast hostile fleet commanding her seas, and threatening and insulting her coasts. Sir Charles Hardy had been appointed on the resignation of Keppel to the command of the English fleet, but, in spite of the utmost exertions, it amounted only to thirty-eight ships of the line, with a number of frigates. For several weeks the French and Spanish fleets cruised about the English coast, lying especially in front of Plymouth, and there were almost hourly fears that a landing would be effected. The militia were embodied. Swift cruisers traversed the sea in every direction watching the movements of the enemy. Volunteer forces were hastily raised, and a proclamation was issued, ordering the cattle and draught horses to be driven from any part of the coast on which a landing was effected. It was known that France had for some time been collecting troops at Havre and St. Malo for an invasion. The defences of Plymouth were wretchedly insufficient, and although Hardy endeavoured to draw the French into a narrow part of the Channel, in which he might encounter them at less disadvantage, he was not able to effect his purpose.

The danger appeared extreme. The humiliation was intolerable, and the letters of the most serious members of the Opposition show that, in their opinion, the country had been conducted to the very brink of ruin.[1] Fortunately, however, the hostile fleet was feebly

[1] See the touching letter of Burke to Champion (Burke's *Correspondence*, ii. 286, 290); and the letter of Rockingham to Keppel a little later (Albemarle's *Life of Rockingham*, ii. 384, 390). A letter of Fox to Fitzpatrick, written immediately after inspecting the English fleet, is in a different tone, and shows clearly (like some of his letters during the war of the French Revolution) how deeply his patriotism was affected by party spirit. 'The fleet to-day was a most magnificent sight; . . . faith, when one looks at it and thinks there is a possibility of its coming

commanded, and very imperfectly equipped. Sickness raged violently in its crews, and early in September, as the season of the equinoctial gales was rapidly approaching, it retired to Brest, where it remained inactive for several months. A great panic and humiliation, and the capture of a single ship of war of sixty-four guns, were the sole fruits of the expedition.

With thirteen colonies in revolt, with France and Spain leagued against her, with Holland already showing signs of hostility, and without a single ally in the world, the position of England seemed nearly desperate. But, although she had for a time lost the empire of the sea, and was outnumbered and overpowered even in her own Channel, yet the admirable seamanship of her sailors was still conspicuous. Great numbers of valuable French and Spanish merchantmen were in different parts of the globe captured by English cruisers, while the English traders, for the most part, escaped. Just before the combined fleets entered the Channel, a fleet of merchantmen from the West Indies, consisting of one hundred and twenty-five sail, and valued at no less than four millions, arrived in safety ; and almost immediately after the hostile fleet had left the English coast, another fleet from the East Indies was equally successful.[1]

A far more enterprising seaman than those who guided the French and Spanish fleets was, however,

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to action in a day or two : *on se sent ému beaucoup*. If some things were otherwise at home, and the fleet was commanded by Keppel, one should feel very eager indeed, when even in the present damned state of things, who cannot help feeling something at the sight of it ? '—*Fox's Correspondence*, i. 234. The Duke of Richmond, who was Lord Lieutenant of Sussex, informed a meeting of the magistrates of that county that he disapproved of the proclamation about driving away the cattle in the event of an invasion, and that he would do nothing to carry it out.—*Correspondence of George III. with Lord North*, ii. 276, 279.

[1] Stedman, ii. 163. *Correspondence of George III. with Lord North*, ii. 275.

at this time hovering around the British coasts. Paul Jones, the most daring and successful of the American corsairs, was by birth a Scotchman. He had been on sea since his twelfth year, had been for some time engaged in the slave trade, and had settled down in Virginia in 1773. He was the first man to raise the flag of independence on the Delaware, and in 1777 he had a roving commission in a ship called the 'Ranger.' In 1778 he made a descent upon the town of Whitehaven, set fire to the shipping, took two forts, spiked thirty pieces of cannon, and plundered the house of Lord Selkirk, near Kirkcudbright. In 1779 he was placed at the head of a small squadron which had been fitted up at Port L'Orient, and which consisted of three ships carrying respectively 40, 36, and 32 guns, with two smaller vessels. In the beginning of August he was hanging around the coast of Kerry, and making frequent descents,[1] and in the following month he appeared near the mouth of the Humber. Soon after, he succeeded in intercepting a large fleet of merchantmen from the Baltic, which was convoyed by the 'Serapis,' a ship of 44 guns, under Captain Pierson, and the 'Countess of Scarborough,' commanded by Captain Piercy, a ship of 20 guns. A desperate fight ensued, which lasted for between two and three hours. For some time the hostile ships lay so close together that the muzzles of their guns touched. The ships on both sides were almost torn to pieces, and much more than half of their crews killed or wounded. At length, the English ships of war, being almost sinking, were obliged to surrender, but the merchant fleet they had convoyed escaped safely to shore.[2]

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[1] This is mentioned in a letter from Lord Buckingham.—*MS. Record Office.*

[2] See the *Life of Paul Jones*, by J. H. Sherburne. Stedman, ii. 163–165.

Including the German troops in her pay, England was said in this year to have had no less than 314,000 men in arms. Ireland, however, had been left almost defenceless, and was in a condition of extreme peril. The Presbyterians of the North openly sympathised with the Americans. The Catholics of the other provinces, though they remained perfectly passive, were very naturally suspected of sympathising much with the French, and more with the Spaniards. Thousands of Irishmen were in the French and Spanish armies, and there were serious reasons to believe that Vergennes was planning a descent upon the Irish coast, while the distress produced by war, added to the commercial restrictions imposed by the English Parliament, had reduced the country to virtual bankruptcy. Under these circumstances the Irish Protestants, finding the English Government totally unable to protect them either from foreign invasion or from internal anarchy, resolved to defend themselves, and in 1778 a great volunteer army was created, with the sanction of the Lord Lieutenant. During four years of extreme peril it maintained the country in perfect peace, and made it so strong that no invasion was attempted; but at the same time, while proclaiming and proving its full loyalty to the connection, it exacted an entire removal of the restrictions that bound Irish trade, and a complete recognition of the legislative independence of the Irish Parliament. This memorable page of Irish history must be deferred to another volume. At present it will be sufficient to say that the government of Ireland had passed almost wholly out of the control of the ministers in London.

I have already mentioned the loss of St. Vincent's and Grenada, which had made the year 1779 so disastrous to England in the West Indies; but Count d'Estaing, soon after the capture of these islands, sailed, on

the approach of the hurricane season, to Hispaniola. In America, and especially in the Northern provinces, the war was very languid. On the side of the Americans financial ruin was rapidly advancing. In this single year more than 140 millions of paper dollars were thrown into circulation.[1] The depreciation was soon at least 20 to 1, and voices were already heard proposing to correct the evil with the sponge.[2] The old difficulty of procuring recruits was now greatly aggravated, and late in the spring of 1779 the whole continental army, exclusive of a few troops in the Southern provinces, amounted to only 16,000 men.[3] Officers found it impossible to live on their pay. An additional bounty of 200 dollars was offered by Congress to all who would serve in the continental army for the whole duration of the war; but it was paid in depreciated paper, and it was far exceeded by the bounties offered by the separate States, often for short periods of service. The interest of the war had in a great measure gone down since the European alliances, and in this, as in former periods, the letters of Washington are full of those complaints of popular indifference and selfishness which make the

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[1] Bolles, 88.

[2] Washington's *Works*, vi. 331, 332. Washington himself experienced in this year the dishonesty of debtors paying off old debts in paper.—Washington's *Works*, vi. 321, 322.

[3] Hildreth, iii. 274. Washington's *Works*, vi. 196, 198. Virginia offered a bounty of no less than 750 dollars, besides some land, to any soldier who would enlist for the war. In a letter on July 29, Washington says: 'Excepting about 400 recruits from the State of Massachusetts Bay (a portion of whom, I am told, are children hired at about 1,500 dollars each for nine months' service), I have had no reinforcement to this army since last campaign.'—Ibid. p. 312. In November 1779, he says: 'Our whole force, including all sorts of troops . . . supposing every man to have existed and to have been in service at that time [in October]—a point, however, totally inadmissible—amounted to 27,098.'—Ibid. p. 402.

history of the American Revolution so monotonous and so depressing.[1]

The English were for the most part concentrated at New York, and they had begun to fortify its approaches. The population of that town appear to have been in general thoroughly loyal, and, letters of marque having been issued, more than 150 prizes were in less than six months brought by loyalist privateers into New York harbour.[2] The garrison in Rhode Island was in the course of this year withdrawn, and the few inconsiderable isolated expeditions which were made with various success in the Northern provinces need not be related in detail. Two expeditions, however, must be specially noticed, for they proved that the threats of the Commissioners that the war would be carried on by the English in a harsher spirit were by no means idle. Governor Tryon strongly represented to the English Government that 'vigorous and hostile depredations' by small detachments sent from the army at New York would soon make America 'call aloud for the settlement offered by the King's Commissioners,'[3] and in May 1779 an expedition, commanded by Sir George Collier and General Matthew, made a descent upon Virginia, burned or

[1] Thus on May 8, 1779, he writes: 'The rapid decay of our currency, the extinction of public spirit, the increasing rapacity of the times, the want of harmony in our councils, the declining zeal of the people, the discontents and distresses of the officers of the army, and I may add the prevailing security and insensibility to danger, are symptoms in my eye of a most alarming nature. If the enemy have it in their power to press us hard this campaign, I know not what may be the consequence. Our army, as it now stands, is but little more than the skeleton of an army. I hear of no steps that are taking to give it strength and substance.' —Ibid. p. 251. In a letter written ten days later to a friend he says: 'I have no scruple in declaring to you that I have never yet seen the time in which our affairs in my opinion were at so low an ebb as at the present.' —Ibid. p. 252.

[2] *Documents relating to the Colonial History of New York*, viii. 754, 757, 759.

[3] Ibid. 750.

captured more than 130 vessels, destroyed nearly all the magazines, storehouses, and dockyards, over a large area, burnt every house in the little town of Suffolk except a church and one private dwelling-house, reduced many country-houses to ruin, and carried off or destroyed great quantities of tobacco and of provisions. About six weeks later a second expedition, in which 2,600 land troops were employed, under the personal command of Governor Tryon, descended upon Connecticut. The little town of New Haven was given up to almost indiscriminate plunder. Fairfield, East Haven, and the flourishing town of Norwalk, were set fire to and wholly or partially destroyed, and an immense amount of property of many kinds was plundered or burned. The conduct of the British was only slightly palliated by the allegation that the dockyards which were ruined had been largely employed in fitting out privateers against the English navy, and that the little towns which were burnt had fired upon English troops. Vast numbers of peaceable and inoffensive persons who did not make the shadow of resistance were ruined and outraged, and the expeditions of the English were probably much more efficacious in arousing indignation and in alienating loyalists than in intimidating the enemy.[1] It is worthy of notice that Baron Kalb, who had served through the whole of the Seven Years' War, and who was therefore not likely to feel any exaggerated sensitiveness about abuses of the rights of war, condemned in the most emphatic manner these proceedings of the English.[2]

An American expedition under General Sullivan was, in the summer of 1779, directed with terrible

[1] Ramsay. Stedman, ii. 136–139, 142–144. Washington's *Letters*, vi. 292, 293. See, too, p. 208.

[2] See the passages quoted in Greene's *German Element in the American War of Independence*, pp. 151, 152.

effect against the Six nations—the Indian tribes who inhabited the vast and fertile country between New England, the Middle States, and Canada. They had, with few exceptions, been steadily on the side of England, and they had committed some ravages and some very horrible murders. The Americans now, with scarcely any loss, reduced their whole country to a desert. The Indians had of late years made considerable steps in the path of prosperity and civilisation, and the invaders were surprised to find little towns of large and commodious houses, well-cultivated corn-fields and gardens, extensive orchards, and all the signs of a happy and flourishing people. In a few days little remained but charred and blackened ruins. Orchards which had been planted many years before, were deliberately cut down. The crops now rapidly approaching harvest were burnt to the stalk. Every human habitation was destroyed, and the whole people were driven in headlong flight to Niagara, more than one hundred miles from their former homes. A similar war, carried on with similar ferocity by Colonel Brodhead, devastated the Indian country on the Alleghany, French Creek, and other waters of the Ohio above Fort Pitt, and famine, fire, and the sword almost extirpated, over great districts, the last descendants of the ancient rulers of the land.[1]

The most important English expeditions of this year were in the Southern provinces. The brilliant successes of last year in Georgia, and the revelation of the loyalist feelings of its people, encouraged the English to make the conquest of the Southern colonies, and especially of the Carolinas, a main object of their policy, and the extreme alarm of Washington[2] is a strong indication

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[1] Ramsay, ii. 145, 148. Washington's *Works*, vi. 349, 350, 356, 384.

[2] Ibid. p. 248.

that the policy was a wise one. In the Carolinas there were large numbers of Germans, Dutch, and Quakers who took but little interest in the war, and the remaining population was very heterogeneous and divided. The reins of power in this, as in the other provinces, had fallen into the hands of the revolutionary classes; but England had many friends among the rich and in the trading classes, and there was a large Scotch settlement which was enthusiastically loyal.

The Irish Presbyterians, on the other hand, appear to have been everywhere bitterly anti-English, and outside New England it is probable that they did more of the real fighting of the Revolution than any other class. The backwoodsmen also, who looked upon the English as protectors or allies of the Indians, were vehement Whigs. The war in the Southern colonies had always the aspect of a civil war, and it was peculiarly ferocious. In the spring of 1779, a party of loyalists having been defeated by the Americans in South Carolina, the prisoners were tried according to the New State law, which made their offence treason; seventy were condemned to death and five were actually executed. A loyalist captain who had been himself tarred and feathered and otherwise insulted retaliated by hanging Whig prisoners.[1] In April the English forces at Savannah, having obtained considerable reinforcements, took the field. They soon overran a great part of South Carolina, gained several successes over the militia that were opposed to them, arrived before the lines of Charleston, and appeared so formidable that the Americans proposed the neutrality of the State till the conclusion of the peace determined to whom it should belong. The British rejected the offer; but they were as yet too weak to attack Charleston, and they retired

[1] Ramsay, ii. 114. Hildreth, iii. 277, 278.

with much booty into Georgia. In September Count d'Estaing, with a French fleet of twenty sail of the line and eleven frigates, appeared unexpectedly off the coast of Georgia, and Savannah was besieged by a very powerful force, comprising more than 3,500 French soldiers, with many cannon, as well as a large number of Americans. The defence was brave, skilful, and completely successful. After a siege of rather more than three weeks, and after a general assault in which the French were driven back with a loss of more than 1,000 men, and in which the gallant Pulaski fell mortally wounded, the siege was abandoned, and the French, having re-embarked their troops and artillery, sailed for the West Indies. In the garrison which so nobly defended Savannah there were at least 1,000 American loyalists. Clinton resolved to make the reduction of the southern colonies the main task of the forthcoming year, and a few days before the close of 1779 he embarked himself for the Southern expedition with 7,000 men, 2,000 of whom were American loyalists. General Kniphausen, with a strong garrison of English, German, and American loyalist troops, was left at New York.[1]

To conclude our account of the military operations of 1779, it is only necessary to add that Spain, in addition to her naval demonstration in the English Channel, had at once taken measures to attain several of the objects for which she had entered into the war. The siege of Gibraltar was actively pursued. A Spanish force from the Spanish colony of Louisiana crossed the Mississippi, and, without difficulty, took possession of the almost uninhabited province of West Florida, and the Governor of Honduras attacked and expelled the English woodmen, whose right to cut log-wood in that bay had been a very old Spanish grievance, and had

[1] Hildreth, iii. 295. Stedman, ii. 124–132.

been finally established by the Treaty of Paris. The English Governor of Jamaica, however, had anticipated the probability of this proceeding, and an English expedition speedily attacked and took by storm the powerful fortress of Omoa, which is the key of Honduras Bay. The English were shortly after obliged to dismantle and to abandon it; but the Spanish ships which had taken shelter under its guns, and which were captured when it fell, were valued at not less than three millions of dollars.[1]

In the year 1780, the Southern campaign in America was vigorously pushed on. General Clinton only landed with his forces from New York in the neighbourhood of Charleston on March 29, after a stormy and disastrous voyage, which must have brought vividly before many minds the enormous natural difficulties of subduing a country that it took so much time even to traverse. The Americans had ample notice of the intention of the English to attack Charleston: they had carefully fortified the great Southern capital, and they summoned, under penalty of confiscation, all the militia of the province and all the male inhabitants to the defence. It is, however, a remarkable sign of the languor or disaffection of the Southern provinces that, although Washington had detached from his own army North Carolina and Virginian troops for the defence of Charleston,[2] it was only possible to collect somewhat less than 3,000 men, exclusive of the town population, but including the militia of the province.[3] The defence was

[1] Stedman, ii. 166–174.

[2] Washington's *Works*, vi. 487.

[3] Ramsay, ii. 155. There were probably about 3,000 other adult males in the town, and they helped in the defence (p. 156). See, too, Bancroft. Stedman, the English historian, who was present in the war in South Carolina (ii. 229), says that 'General Lincoln at Charleston had 7,000 men of all denominations under arms' (ii. 179). Hildreth says the forces of Lincoln were 'upwards of 7,000 men, including 2,300 continen-

entrusted to General Lincoln, and it did great honour to the skill, courage, and tenacity of the garrison. Charleston was the first town the Americans had attempted to defend, and it was besieged by a force, drawn from various quarters, which amounted to not less than 9,000 men. At last, on May 12, it was obliged to capitulate. More than 5,000 men, including the garrison and all adult males, surrendered as prisoners of war. Eight small ships of war, which lay in the harbour, were taken or sunk, and 400 cannon as well as large magazines were captured. The English during the whole siege lost little more than 250 men.[1] In the beginning of June, Clinton returned with a large part of his troops to New York, leaving a detachment of 4,000 men under Lord Cornwallis to prosecute the war in the South. 'The inhabitants from every quarter,' wrote Clinton just before leaving South Carolina, 'declare their allegiance to the King and offer their services in arms. There are few men in South Carolina who are not either our prisoners or in arms with us.'[2]

'We look on America as at our feet,' wrote Horace Walpole to Mann, when the news of the reduction of Charleston arrived.[3] With Savannah and Charleston in the hands of the English, the old dominion might indeed be regarded as re-established in a great portion of the Southern colonies. A few American troops, who had appeared in the northern extremity of South Carolina, hastily retreated, and one detachment of about

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tals, 1,000 North Carolina militia, and the militia of the city, amounting to near 4,000. All the aid sent in from the surrounding country did not amount to 200 men.'—*History of the United States*, iii. 306. According to the *Cornwallis Correspondence* (i. 44), 'Lincoln surrendered with about 6,000 men, 400 pieces of artillery, and large magazines.'

[1] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, i. 44.

[2] Bancroft, x. 308.

[3] Walpole to Mann, July 24, 1780.

300 men, being overtaken, was almost cut to pieces, very little quarter being given. Except in the line where the State bordered on North Carolina, all resistance had ceased, and the country was scarcely less peaceful than before the war had begun, while loyalist insurrections in North Carolina, prematurely and imprudently undertaken and savagely suppressed, showed how insecure was the hold of the Revolution in that province. In North Carolina, however, and especially along the border between that province and South Carolina, there were many determined Whigs, and some real efforts were made by the surrounding provinces to check the English. Clinton, before leaving South Carolina, invited the inhabitants to enroll themselves in the loyal militia, offered free pardon to all insurgents who had not been concerned in the execution of loyalists, promised various immunities to all who would actively support the Crown, and guaranteed the State a speedy restoration of its Constitution, and an exemption from all taxation except by its own Legislature. He at the same time threatened to confiscate the goods of all who again took arms against the King, and, by a later and a very injudicious proclamation, he discharged the paroles of all suspected persons who had not been actually taken in arms, restored them to the rights and duties of citizens, but at the same time commanded them to return to their allegiance on pain of being treated as rebels.

This proclamation, by making neutrality impossible, excited a great and reasonable discontent, which began to assume a graver form when the intelligence arrived that Baron de Kalb, at the head of about 2,000 men detached from the army of Washington, was marching rapidly through North Carolina. Kalb was soon joined by large bodies of militia, and the whole force was placed under the command of Gates, the victor of Sara-

toga. It appears to have consisted altogether of about 6,000 men, and on August 16 a very severe battle was fought near Camden. Cornwallis, who commanded the English, had some superiority in position, and a great superiority in cavalry, but the Americans were altogether nearly three times as numerous as the English.[1] A large portion of their militia, however, gave way at the first shock, and the English gained one of the most decisive victories of the whole war. The Americans lost all their cannon, and the greater part of their baggage; Kalb fell mortally wounded; and the defeated army, with a loss of many hundreds of men, was pursued in wild confusion for more than twenty miles from the field of battle. Another American corps, numbering about 700 men, under General Sumpter, was in South Carolina, and it at once determined to retreat; but Colonel Tarleton succeeded, with a much smaller force, and by a march of extraordinary rapidity, in intercepting and surprising it. The American commander escaped with difficulty; more than 450 of the provincials were either killed or taken. They lost all their cannon, baggage, and ammunition; 1,000 stand of arms were taken, and the whole force was completely scattered. By these two victories the American army in the Southern provinces was annihilated or dispersed.[2]

It was hoped that the immediate reduction of North Carolina would follow, but the expectation was not realised. Cornwallis found it necessary to wait some time for the arrival of fresh stores from Charleston, and in the meantime the Americans, whose daring and fertility of resource were never more conspicuously displayed than at times when all appeared lost, soon recovered their panic. In a few weeks several parties—

[1] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, i. 492–495.

[2] Ibid. i. Compare the accounts in Stedman, Ramsay, and Bancroft.

capable, however, only of waging a guerrilla warfare—were in arms in North Carolina, while in South Carolina disaffection was spreading. Opinion in the provinces was, in reality, much divided, and although it is probable that in South Carolina at least, there were many more who sympathised with England than with the Revolution, the prevailing desire of the inhabitants was to remain neutral and to do nothing that could provoke the resentment of either of the contending parties. This neutrality had become difficult or impossible. Cornwallis endeavoured to form his militia exclusively out of loyal inhabitants, but there were many deserters, and one whole corps, which had been entrusted with the protection of some sick soldiers, went over to the enemy, giving up their officers and the sick soldiers as prisoners. Cornwallis issued orders that all who, having taken protections from the English, had subsequently joined in the revolt, should be punished with the greatest rigour, and their whole property taken or destroyed, and that every militiaman who had voluntarily borne arms for the English, and had afterwards deserted to the enemy, should be hanged.[1] Several such men were executed after the defeats of Gates and Sumpter. Imitating the policy which the revolutionary party had steadily pursued, he confiscated for the public service the estates of all who had left the province to join the enemies of Great Britain, who held commissions under the authority of Congress, or who were opposing the re-establishment of the royal Government, reserving, however, an allowance for their wives and children. A large section of Charleston society was strongly in favour of the Revolution, and, having discovered that several of its members when on parole had been in correspondence with the enemy, Cornwallis sent about forty of them as

[1] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, i. 56–58.

prisoners to St. Augustine, in East Florida. After a short imprisonment they were released upon parole, but their banishment excited great resentment, and Charleston society showed itself extremely hostile to the British. Ladies refused to attend public assemblies lest they should encounter English officers, and female influence was busily employed in fomenting revolt.

These things might not have been very serious if the projected invasion of North Carolina had succeeded. In September the English entered that province in three bodies, but, though there were some Scotch settlements favourable to them, the general spirit of the people proved exceedingly hostile. English messengers were waylaid, English foraging parties were cut off, and straggling soldiers were shot down by men concealed in the forests. Wild backwoodsmen from Kentucky and other settlements westward of the Alleghany Mountains, had been collected, and, being joined by companies of militia and by the relics of the shattered armies of Gates and Sumpter, they gradually became a formidable force. They did not venture to attack the main body of the English; but on October 9 they fell upon the most advanced detachment, which was commanded by Major Ferguson, and consisted almost exclusively of loyal militia, and after a hard fight they totally defeated it. The commander was killed. Nearly all who did not share his fate were compelled to surrender, and ten of the most obnoxious loyalist prisoners were hanged upon the field. The blow was so formidable that on October 14 Cornwallis ordered a retreat. On November 20 the third detachment of the English, which was commanded by Colonel Tarleton, was attacked at Blackstock Hill by General Sumpter at the head of a very superior force, and was defeated, though without serious loss. Before the close of the year North Carolina had been wholly evacuated, and the only fruits as yet attained by

the Southern campaign were the complete conquest of Georgia and of South Carolina.

In the Northern provinces during many months little of any importance had happened. Both the British army at New York and the army of Washington at West Point had been much weakened by the detachments which they sent to the South, and neither was strong enough for a serious enterprise. The winter was one of the coldest ever known in America. The troops of Washington suffered much more from it than the English, who had the shelter of a great town; but, on the other hand, the water around New York was during several weeks so hard frozen that artillery could have passed over it.[1] The ships of war were rendered useless by the ice, and New York, in losing its insular position, lost its chief advantages for defence. Had there been a French army in North America, the town would probably have been captured, and the war might have been speedily terminated.

The condition of the Americans, however, was at this time as wretched as during any part of the contest. All provisions brought to New York were paid for in hard money; those which were brought to West Point in enormously depreciated currency. The devastations of the previous year had destroyed some of the chief sources of supply, and, although forced requisitions of food were systematically made over a wide area, the extreme severity of the weather and the passive resistance of the farmers made it very difficult to bring the supplies to camp.[2] The letters of Washington greatly resemble those of the winter at Valley Forge. 'The present situation of the army,' he wrote on January 8, 1780, 'with respect to provisions is the most distressing

[1] *Documents relating to the Colonial History of New York*, viii. 781, 782.

[2] Washington's *Works*, vi. 432, 433, 440, 482.

of any we have experienced since the beginning of the war. For a fortnight past the troops, both officers and men, have been almost perishing for want. They have been alternately without bread or meat the whole time, with a very scanty allowance of either, and frequently destitute of both.'[1] He described his troops as 'men half starved, imperfectly clothed, riotous, and robbing the country people of their subsistence from sheer necessity.'[2] 'There never,' he wrote about two months later, 'has been a stage of the war in which the dissatisfaction has been so general and alarming. It has lately in particular instances worn features of a very dangerous complexion.'

As the springtime advanced there was no improvement. 'We are constantly on the point of starving,' he wrote at the end of April, 'for want of provisions and forage.' A month later he wrote to Reed, the President of Pennsylvania: 'There is such a combination of circumstances to exhaust the patience of the soldiery that it begins at length to be worn out, and we see in every line of the army the most serious features of mutiny and sedition. All our departments, all our operations are at a stand, and unless a system very different from that which has for a long time prevailed be immediately adopted throughout the States, our affairs must soon become desperate beyond the possibility of recovery. If you were on the spot, my dear sir . . . you would be convinced that these expressions are not too strong, and that we have everything to dread. Indeed, I have almost ceased to hope. The country in general is in such a state of insensibility and indifference to its interests that I dare not flatter myself with any change for the better.'[3] It is true that the whole English garrison of New York and its

[1] Washington's *Works*, vi. 439.
[2] Ibid. pp. 439, 441.
[3] Ibid. pp. 13, 25, 58.

dependencies, which was the one stronghold of the English power in the Northern colonies, consisted, according to Washington's own estimate, during a long period of only 8,000 regular soldiers, about 4,000 loyalist refugees, and the militia raised from New York and its vicinity.[1] It is true that England was without an ally in the world, and that America had two of the greatest Powers in Europe assisting her in the struggle, yet still in the fourth year of the war Washington gravely doubted whether there was sufficient power, sufficient patriotism, sufficient earnestness in the States to carry it to a successful issue.

'The combined fleets of France and Spain,' he wrote, 'last year were greatly superior to those of the enemy. Nevertheless, the enemy sustained no material damage, and at the close of the campaign gave a very important blow to our allies. This campaign the difference between the fleets will be inconsiderable. What are we to expect if there should be another campaign? In all probability the advantage will be on the side of the English, and then what would become of America? We ought not to deceive ourselves. The maritime resources of Great Britain are more substantial and real than those of France and Spain united. . . . In modern wars the longest purse must chiefly determine the event. I fear that of the enemy will be found to be so.' What little unity there had ever been between the States seemed rapidly breaking up. 'I see one head gradually changing into thirteen. I see one army branching into thirteen, which, instead of looking up to Congress as the supreme controlling power of the United States, are considering themselves as dependent on their respective States. In a word, I see the power of Congress declining too fast for consideration and respect.'[2]

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[1] Washington's *Works*, vi. 39.

[2] Ibid. vii. 59, 60, 68.

It was necessary, in the opinion of Washington, that there should be at least 20,000 efficient continental troops, but this very modest requirement was more than could be complied with.[1] Bounties which were nominally enormous, and which, even allowing for the depreciation of money, were very great, were offered by some States, and the different conditions under which the troops of the same army were enlisted were the occasion of endless bitterness and recrimination.[2] It was, however, quite impossible to recruit the American army by voluntary means, and it was only by compulsory drafting from the local militias that the small force could be kept together.[3] For several months 100 deserters on an average appeared monthly at the British camp at New York, and the number doubled when the press for soldiers for the continental army began.[4] From every side signs of discontent were gathering. The officers of the Jersey line addressed a memorial to their State Legislature stating 'that four months' pay of a private would not procure for his family a single bushel of wheat; that the pay of a colonel would not purchase oats for his horse; that a common labourer received four times as much as an American officer.'[5] Two regiments of Connecticut troops broke into open mutiny. Attempts were made to combine both officers and men in a refusal to accept the depreciated paper money, and even in this currency the soldiers were for long periods

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[1] Washington's *Works*, vii. 51, 52.

[2] 'The Pennsylvania soldiers from the commencement were almost universally engaged for the war. When they saw the Eastern levies in the beginning of last campaign who had received enormous bounties, many, a thousand pounds and upwards for a few months, they began to compare situations, to murmur, and to dispute their engagements.'—Ibid. vi. 471. See vii. 166.

[3] See Galloway's *Examination*.

[4] *Documents relating to the Colonial History of New York*, viii. 800.

[5] Ramsay, ii. 184.

unpaid. A committee appointed by Congress to examine the state of the army of Washington in May 1780, reported that it had been unpaid for five months; that it seldom had more than six days' provision in advance; that it had frequently for several successive days been without meat; that the forage was exhausted; that the medical department had neither sugar, coffee, tea, chocolate, wine, nor spirituous liquors of any kind; 'that every department of the army was without money, and had not even the shadow of credit left; that the patience of the soldiers, borne down by the pressure of complicated sufferings, was on the point of being exhausted.'[1]

These representations must be borne in mind if we would judge with equity the party in England which still hoped to subdue America. The expectation was represented by the Opposition at the time, and it has been commonly represented by later historians, as little short of insane. That it was erroneous will now hardly be disputed, but it was certainly not altogether unreasonable. Reports of the most sanguine kind were constantly laid before the Ministers. In February 1780, before the capture of Charleston and subjugation of South Carolina, Governor Tryon wrote that 'the friendly part of America keep up their spirits and are sanguine . . . that the reunion of the Empire will be yet happily established, and those who have been with circumstances of cruelty drove from their estates and families restored.'[2] Loyalists declared that 'the majority on the west side of the Connecticut are desirous of the restoration of the King's authority, and that in many towns and districts both in New York, Connecticut, and Massachusetts Bay they are nearly all so.'

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[1] Ramsay, ii. 188, 189. See, too, Washington's *Works*, vii. 56, 165.

[2] *Documents relating to the Colonial History of New York*, viii. 781.

They assured the Government that the number of the King's friends had been steadily increasing since the proposals of the Royal Commissioners; that the pressing calamities of the time were almost daily adding to them; that the forced requisitions of food and drafts of men were exciting bitter resistance; that farmers refused to raise more than was sufficient for their own consumption, conceiving that the improvement of their farms would only tend to feed and prolong the rebellion; that at least half the rebel army were on the brink of desertion or revolt.[1] Lord George Germaine stated that all the private letters from America were filled with representations of the general distress and sufferings of the people, the discontent of the rebel troops, and the universal wish for peace. From the middle colonies, he was assured, no recruits could be drawn, the militia would not submit to be drafted, and the only hope the Americans possessed of continuing the war depended on foreign aid.[2] The French Admiral, De Ternay, wrote, in the summer of 1780, to Vergennes: 'The fate of North America is yet very uncertain, and the Revolution is not so far advanced as it has been believed in Europe.'[3] Count Fersen, who, in after years, was known as one of the most devoted friends of Marie Antoinette, was quartered in Rhode Island in the autumn of 1780, as the aide-de-camp to Count Rochambeau, and he described all the classes in that New England province who possessed any property as, anxious to be

[1] *Documents relating to the Colonial History of New York*, viii. 783, 787.

[2] See this letter in a note to Washington's *Works*, vii. 30. Lord G. Germaine's intelligence about the middle colonies seems to have been substantially correct. In a letter written in July 1780, Washington, speaking of the new levies, says: 'Pennsylvania has given us not quite 400, and seems to think that she has done admirably well. Jersey has given us fifty or sixty. But I do not despair of Jersey.'—Ibid. p. 125.

[3] Ibid. p. 200.

reconciled to England, and the whole province, as sinking into ruin through the civil war of its inhabitants.[1] In the province of New York there was a large district, called West Chester County, extending nearly thirty miles from north to south, which was once thickly populated and admirably cultivated, and was now almost wholly at the mercy of the revolutionary banditti called the Cowboys, and the loyalist banditti called the Skinners, who were alternately plundering the few inhabitants who remained.[2]

The ardent loyalty of the town of New York was exceedingly encouraging to the English. During the long course of its occupation, no trouble appears to have been experienced from its inhabitants; the neighbouring seas swarmed with New York privateers preying on the commerce of the revolted States, and when the freezing of the waters exposed the town to invasion, it was to the loyalty of the inhabitants themselves that the English chiefly appealed. The appeal was at once and enthusiastically responded to, and Governor Robertson, who had succeeded Tryon in command, wrote that all the English troops might be safely led away from New York to encounter the enemy, for the town would be perfectly secure under the protection

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[1] He says of Rhode Island: 'C'est un pays qui sera fort heureux s'il jouit d'une paix longue, et si les deux partis qui le divisent à present ne lui font subir le sort de la Pologne et de tant d'autres républiques. Ces deux partis sont appelés les Whigs et les Torys. Le premier est entièrement pour la liberté et l'indépendance; il est composé de gens de la plus basse extraction qui ne possèdent point de biens; la plupart des habitants de la campagne en sont. Les Torys sont pour les Anglais, ou pour mieux dire, pour la paix, sans trop se soucier d'être libres ou dépendants; ce sont les gens d'une classe plus distinguée, les seuls qui eussent des biens dans le pays. . . . Lorsque les Whigs sont les plus forts, ils pillent les autres tant qu'ils peuvent.'—*Lettres du Comte Fersen*, i. 40, 41.

[2] Sparks's *Life of Benedict Arnold*, p. 219.

of 6,000 of its own armed citizens.[1] The historian of the American loyalists observes that in April 1775, out of the thirty-seven newspapers then published in the colonies, seven or eight were in the interest of the Crown, and the remainder Whig, but that in the course of the war no less than five of the latter went over to the loyalists.[2]

It was indeed evident that the revolutionary movement depended almost entirely upon the assistance of France. Washington himself frankly admitted that it was impossible, at least under existing circumstances, to accomplish without it either of the two capital objects of the war, the capture of New York, or the expulsion of the English from the Southern States.[3] Count Rochambeau, who was in constant communication with Washington, speaking of this period, states that the American General 'feared, and not without foundation, considering the absolute discredit of the finances of Congress, that the struggles of this campaign would be the last efforts of expiring patriotism,'[4] and Washington himself, in a letter written, in August 1780, to the President of the Congress, expressed a very similar opinion. The period of service of half of the army, he said, would expire at the end of the year. 'The shadow of an army that will remain will have every motive except mere patriotism to abandon the service, without the hope, which has hitherto supported them, of a change

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[1] *Documents relating to the Colonial History of New York*, viii. 789, 792.

[2] Sabine's *American Loyalists*, i. 49. A curious passage in a letter of instructions from Vergennes to M. de la Luzerne (Sept. 25, 1779) makes it probable that the French subsidised some of the anti-English newspapers. He says: 'Sa Majesté vous autorise en outre à continuer les donatifs que M. Gérard a donnés ou promis à différents auteurs américains, et dont ce dernier vous aura sûrement remis la note.'—Circourt, iii. 283.

[3] Washington's *Works*, vii. 38–42, 106, 176, 187, 206.

[4] Ibid. p. 171.

for the better. This is almost extinguished now, and certainly will not outlive the campaign unless it finds something more substantial to rest upon. . . . To me it will appear miraculous if our affairs can maintain themselves much longer in their present train. If either the temper or the resources of the country will not admit of an alteration, we may expect soon to be reduced to the humiliating condition of seeing the cause of America in America upheld by foreign arms.'[1] Looking, indeed, over the whole struggle, it seemed to Washington little less than a miracle that the American Revolution had not long since terminated, and one of the chief reasons of its continuance was the strange inactivity and folly which the English had shown during its earlier stages.[2]

No measures of any great military importance were taken in the Northern States before the arrival of a French fleet and army at Newport on July 10, 1780. The fleet consisted of seven ships of the line besides frigates and transports, commanded by the Chevalier de Ternay, and the army of about 6,000 men under the command of Count Rochambeau. The French Government at the same time sent out instructions, very generously placing their own troops under the command of Washington, and ordering that, when the French and American armies were united, American officers were to command French officers of equal rank.[3] The expedition was to be followed later in the year by a second division, but it was hoped that, with the assistance of the force already arrived, the Americans could accomplish their great object of recapturing New York. This expectation,

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[1] Washington's *Works*, vii. 159, 160.

[2] See a very remarkable passage (unfortunately too long for quotation), reviewing the whole war.— Ibid. pp. 162, 163.

[3] Ibid. i. 336. Stedman, ii. 245.

however, was not verified, and the English, having received the assistance of six British ships of the line which had followed the French across the Atlantic, speedily took the offensive. Clinton embarked 6,000 men at New York and resolved to attack the French in Newport; but a delay in the arrival of transports, which gave the French time to fortify themselves, a difference of opinion between Clinton and Admiral Arbuthnot, who commanded the fleet, and a threatening movement of Washington in the direction of New York, led to the abandonment of the enterprise. The English fleet, however, blockaded the French fleet, and the French army, together with some American militia, was kept inactive for its protection. Even for gunpowder the Americans were now dependent on French assistance, and Washington said that an additional supply of 100 tons was necessary if he was to make a serious attempt on New York.[1]

It was determined to take no step till the second French expedition arrived, or at least till the French had obtained a naval ascendency on the coast. On August 16 a French frigate reached Boston bringing large supplies of guns, cannon, and powder for the Americans, but it also brought the disastrous news that the second division of Count Rochambeau's army, upon which such great hopes were based, was blockaded in the harbour of Brest by an English fleet of thirty-two sail.[2] It was evident that the old Queen of the Sea was fast regaining her ascendency, and that in spite of all the odds that were against her she could still be terrible to her enemies. After a careful consultation it was decided that the attempt to dislodge the English from New York must be indefinitely postponed. It was remembered, however, that the French had in old days been on very good terms with the Indians, and an earnest though

[1] Washington's *Works*, vii. 135. [2] Ibid. p. 176.

unsuccessful effort was made to excite by French influence an Indian rising against the English.[1]

The extreme jealousy of the army which had always prevailed in Congress, and the meddling, domineering spirit in which the lawyers at Philadelphia constantly acted towards the officers, might have produced the worst consequences but for the courtesy and self-control with which Washington was so eminently endowed. In the highest ranks of the army there were constant and sudden changes. Schuyler, though one of the most estimable of the American generals, had been superseded. St. Clair experienced the same fate. Sullivan threw up his commission in disgust. Gates was superseded and brought before a court-martial after his defeat at Camden; and Greene, one of the favourite officers of Washington, resigned in indignation his office of Quartermaster-General on account of some measures of Congress altering the office, as he conceived, to his prejudice. Congress, in its irritation, gravely meditated depriving him of his commission, but relinquished the intention in consequence of an admirable letter of Washington, who urged the extremely bad effect that such a measure would have upon the army, and especially upon the officers, who were in truth sacrificing more than any other class of the American people for the national cause.[2]

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[1] Washington's *Works*, vii. 183, 184.

[2] He says it needs 'no arguments to prove that there is no set of men in the United States, considered as a body, that have made the same sacrifices of their interests in support of the common cause as the officers of the American army; that nothing but a love of their country, of honour, and a desire of seeing their labours crowned with success could possibly induce them to continue one moment in service; that no officer can live upon his pay; that hundreds, having spent their little all in addition to their scanty public allowance, have resigned because they could no longer support themselves as officers; that numbers are at this moment rendered unfit for duty for want

I have already briefly noticed the dismissal of General Lee after the battle of Monmouth, for disobedience to the orders of Washington. It was a fortunate event for the Americans, for it is probable that Lee would have taken an early opportunity to betray them. He had shown, from the beginning of the contest, a laudable desire to appease the quarrel by personal negotiations with English generals; and he declared his conviction that in the first stages of the war the Americans would have been perfectly ready to submit in every respect to Great Britain, provided they might themselves raise, in any way they thought proper, the sum Parliament required of them. He afterwards, as we have seen, expressed himself disgusted with the conduct of his soldiers, and wholly disappointed in the dispositions of the American people, and in March 1777, being then a prisoner in the English camp, he drew up for the English a plan for effecting the conquest of America. In this remarkable document, he expressed his firm belief that America must inevitably be subdued, and that it was therefore desirable both for her and the mother country that the war should be terminated with as little delay and bloodshed as possible. He urgently dwelt on the necessity of a wide amnesty, and moderate and liberal terms, and he then proceeded to designate certain points which ought to be taken possession of by the English in order to sever New England from the other colonies, and secure the immediate subjugation of the Southern provinces. If this plan were adopted, and a proclamation of amnesty issued, and if no untoward accident, such as a rupture

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of clothing, while the rest are wasting their property, and some of them verging fast to the gulf of poverty and distress.'—Washington's *Works*, vii. 150, 151. See, too, a striking statement of the case of the officers in a letter of General Greene to Washington. —Ibid. p. 53.

with a European Power, occurred, he was convinced that in two months every spark of civil war would be extinguished in the colonies.[1]

The Americans, though they were well aware of the insubordinate and capricious character of Lee, appear to have had no suspicion whatever of his treason, but in September 1780 a terrible shock was given to the confidence of their army by the discovery of the treachery of Benedict Arnold.

To anyone who attentively follows the letters of Washington, it will appear evident that there was no officer in the American army of whom for a long period he wrote in terms of higher, warmer, and more frequent eulogy. Arnold was in truth an eminently brave and skilful soldier, and in the early stages of the struggle his services had been of the most distinguished kind. In conjunction with Colonel Allen, he had obtained the first great success of the war by capturing Ticonderoga and Crown Point in the summer of 1775. He had fallen wounded leading the forlorn hope against Quebec on the memorable day on which Montgomery was killed. In the gallant stand that was made at Ticonderoga in October 1776, he had been placed at the head of the American fleet, and his defence of Lake Champlain against overwhelming odds had been one of the most brilliant episodes of the whole American war. He took a leading part in the campaign which ended with the capitulation of Saratoga, led in person that fierce attack on the British lines on October 7, 1777, which made the position of Burgoyne a hopeless one, was himself one of the first men to enter the British lines, and fell severely wounded at the head of his troops. No American soldier had shown a more reckless courage.

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[1] See *The Treason of General Lee*, by George H. Moore (Librarian of the New York Historical Society).

Hardly any had displayed greater military skill or possessed to a higher degree the confidence of the army; and if the wound which he received near Saratoga had proved fatal, the name of Benedict Arnold would have now ranked among the very foremost in the hagiology of American patriotism.

His early letters seem to show beyond question that he began his career as a genuine Whig, but he had probably always been of a type which is common and prominent in all revolutions. Conscious of unbounded energy and courage, of a strong will, and of very considerable military capacities, he saw in the troubles which had arisen an opportunity of carving his way from the position of bookseller, druggist, and smuggler in a small town in Connecticut, to great wealth and world-wide honour. He was a man of coarse fibre and violent ambition, delighting in adventure and combat, very extravagant in his tastes, and at the same time very arrogant, irritable, and insubordinate in his temper. A number of serious charges, some of them affecting his personal integrity, were brought against him relating to incidents in his Canadian career; but the only charges which were submitted to an official investigation were fully disproved, and the Board of War, in a report which was confirmed by Congress, pronounced Arnold to have been 'cruelly and groundlessly aspersed.' This appears to have been the opinion of Washington, who continued to give him his full confidence; it was the opinion of Schuyler, who commanded the army in Canada,[1] and John Adams afterwards expressed his belief that Arnold had been 'basely slandered and libelled.'[2] There were men, however, in Congress who greatly disliked him, and seemed to feel a peculiar pleasure in humiliating him; and in February 1777,

[1] See Arnold's *Life of Arnold*, p. 104. [2] *Familiar Letters*, p. 276.

when Congress appointed five major-generals, Arnold was not on the list, though every one of the officers appointed was his junior in standing. Washington was extremely displeased at this marked slight shown to one who, as he truly said, had 'always distinguished himself as a judicious, brave officer, of great activity, enterprise, and perseverance.' The letters of Arnold show how keenly he felt the wrong, and he spoke seriously of throwing up his commission, but was dissuaded by Washington. A few months later he displayed the most splendid daring in a skirmish with the English near Danbury, and his horse fell pierced by no less than nine bullets. Congress then granted him the promotion that had been hitherto withheld, and presented him with a horse as a token of his conspicuous gallantry, but he never regained his seniority.

The wound which he had received near Saratoga was painful and disabling, and he for a long time could only move about with assistance. Being incapable of taking an active part in the war, Washington placed him in command at Philadelphia after that city had been evacuated by the English, and he there fell under new and powerful influences. His first wife had died in the summer of 1775, when he was in the midst of his Northern campaign, and, in April 1779, after a long courtship, he married Miss Shippen, a young lady of great beauty and attraction, who belonged to one of the leading families in Philadelphia, and to a family of Tory sympathies. He loved her deeply and faithfully, and there is something inexpressibly touching in the tender affection and the undeviating admiration for her husband, which she retained through all the vicissitudes of his dark and troubled life.[1] He mixed much in the best

[1] See her sad and touching letters, written chiefly from England, in Mr. Isaac Arnold's very interesting *Life of Benedict Arnold.*

society at Philadelphia, and although the more decided loyalists had been driven into exile, the social atmosphere was still very Tory, and many of the best and most respected citizens were secretly sighing for the overthrow of what they regarded as the revolutionary tyranny, and for a return to the settled condition of the past. He kept open house, plunged into expenses far greater than he could meet, and, like many other American officers, entered into several enterprises which were not military. He speculated largely. He took part in various commercial undertakings. He had shares in privateering expeditions, but his speculations do not appear to have been successful, and he was sinking rapidly into debt. Party spirit ran furiously at Philadelphia, and Arnold, who had nothing of the tact and self-control of Washington, soon made many enemies. A long series of charges against him were laid before Congress, some of them deeply affecting his honour, and amounting to little short of an imputation of swindling, while others were of the most trivial description. Congress referred the matter to a committee, which reported in favour of Arnold ; but, in spite of this report, Congress insisted on sending Arnold, on some of the charges, before a court-martial. The proceedings were greatly delayed, and nearly a year passed between the promulgation of the charges and the final decision, and during all this time the commander of the chief town in the States, and one of the most distinguished generals in the American service, was kept in a condition of the most painful and humiliating suspense. He resented it fiercely, and was little mollified by the result of the court-martial. On all the graver charges he was acquitted, and he was condemned only on two counts of the most petty character. He had exceeded his powers in giving a passport to a vessel containing American property which was in Philadelphia while that town was

occupied by the English, and he had, on one occasion, employed public waggons to convey some of his private property. This, the court-martial said, ought not to have been done, though Arnold 'had no design of employing the waggons otherwise than at his own private expense, nor of defrauding the public, nor of injuring or impeding the public service.' For these two offences he was condemned to the great humiliation of a formal and a public reprimand.

Washington, who was obliged to execute the sentence of the court-martial, did the utmost in his power to mitigate the blow, and nothing could be more skilful than the language[1] with which he made his reprimand the vehicle of a high eulogy on the services and the character of Arnold. While the sentence of the court-martial was in suspense, another stroke had fallen which affected both his fortune and his reputation. During his command in Canada, he had often acted as commissary and quartermaster. Much public money had passed through his hands, and he had large claims upon Congress. His accounts were examined at great length, and after great delay, by the Board of Treasury and by a committee of Congress; they were found to be in much confusion, which was possibly due to the hurry and turmoil of an active campaign, and a large part of the claims of Arnold were disallowed. How far the sentence was just, it is now impossible to say. The

[1] 'Our profession is the chastest of all. The shadow of a fault tarnishes our most brilliant actions. The least inadvertence may cause us to lose that public favour which is so hard to be gained. I reprimand you for having forgotten that in proportion as you had rendered yourself formidable to our enemies, you should have shown moderation towards our citizens. Exhibit again those splendid qualities which have placed you in the rank of our most distinguished generals. As far as it shall be in my power I will myself furnish you with opportunities for regaining the esteeem which you have formerly enjoyed.'—Sparks's *Life of Arnold*, p. 145.

character of Arnold gives no presumption that he would have shown scrupulous integrity in money dealings; but, on the other hand, the Congress was full of his personal enemies, who were determined by any means to hunt him down, and he loudly and vehemently declared that his judges had been actuated by private resentment or undue influence, and that they were wholly unfit to give any impartial judgment on his case.[1] Ruin seemed now staring him in the face, and he even made an application, without success, for money to the representative of the French Government.

It is easy to conceive the influence of these things upon a proud, violent, ambitious, and unprincipled man, conscious of having rendered great services to his country, and at this very time suffering under the irritation and the impotence arising from a severe wound. Early in 1779 he had sent some letters to Clinton under the name of Gustavus, in which, without revealing his name or his rank, and without making any positive overtures, he had expressed his dislike to the French alliance, and had from time to time given the British commander pieces of authentic intelligence. On the English side the correspondence was chiefly conducted under a false name by Major André, the Adjutant-General of the British army, a young officer of singular promise and popularity. After the sentence of the court-martial, Arnold appears at last to have fully determined to go over to the English, and he was equally determined not to go over as a mere insignificant and isolated individual. Ambition, cupidity, and revenge must all be gratified. At Saratoga he had done much to ruin the British cause. He would now undo, and more than undo, his work, annihilate by an act of skilful treachery the only considerable army in the

[1] See his petition in Washington's *Works*, vi. 529, 530.

North, restore America at once to peace and to the British rule, and make himself the Monk of the American Revolution.

Few great plots have more nearly succeeded. Though there had been murmurs about the leniency of Arnold to Tories and about the admission of Tories into his society, his fidelity to the American cause seems to have been quite unsuspected, and Washington especially looked upon him with the most perfect confidence. On the plea that his wound was not yet sufficiently cured, Arnold excused himself from serving actively with Washington in the field, but he asked for and easily obtained the command of Westpoint, which included all the American forts in the highlands, and was the essential key of the whole American position.[1] He arrived at Westpoint in the first week of August, and lost very little time in concerting with Clinton for a surrender of the post to the British.

Clinton has been absurdly blamed for listening to these overtures, but he only acted as any general of any nation would have acted, and he would have deserved the gravest censure if he had neglected such an opportunity of bringing to an end the desolation and the bloodshed of the war. It was necessary to send a confidential agent to arrange the details of the surrender and the terms of the bargain, and this task was committed to André. Arnold invited him to come within the American lines, but both Clinton and André himself positively declined the proposal, and Clinton was determined that nothing should be done that could bring André under the category of a spy. A British sloop called the 'Vulture,' with André on board, sailed

[1] It may be noticed that a great part of the works at Westpoint had been constructed under the direction of Kosciusko, the Polish hero, whose services in America were warmly eulogised by Washington. —Washington's *Works*, vii. 148.

up the Hudson River to within a few miles of the American camp; and Washington having just left the camp on a visit to the French commander at Hartford, a boat, with muffled oars, was sent by Arnold a little before midnight to the 'Vulture' to bring André to shore. The boatmen were wholly ignorant of the nature of their mission. They were furnished with a passport authorising them to pass freely with a flag of truce, but they were told that it was of public interest that the expedition should be secret. Arnold and André met at a lonely spot on the bank of the river. The meeting was on the night of September 21. André wore his uniform, covered by a blue great-coat, and the spot where the interview took place was outside the American lines, so that if they had been arrested there, André could not have been treated otherwise than as a prisoner of war. The nights, however, were still short, and the daylight having dawned before the affair was fully arranged, it became necessary either to leave it unfinished and risk the dangers of a second interview, or else to seek some place of concealment. Arnold then induced André to enter the American lines and take shelter in the house of a man named Smith, who was devoted to the American General, and who had already been employed to bring André to shore. He remained there during the day, and in the evening, all being arranged, André prepared to return.

In the meantime, however, the 'Vulture' had been noticed with suspicion by the American soldiers, and had been compelled to change her position in consequence of a cannon which was brought to bear on her. The risk of carrying André back by water was so great that Smith refused to incur it, and the only chance of safety was to return by land to New York, a distance of about thirty miles. To accomplish this object André exchanged his British uniform for a civilian's dress; he

obtained from Arnold a pass enabling him under the name of John Anderson to traverse the American lines, and he concealed in his boots unsigned papers written by Arnold containing such full and detailed information as would enable Clinton without difficulty to seize the fortifications of Westpoint. On the evening of the 22nd he passed the American lines in safety under the guidance of Smith, and slept in a house beyond them, and the next day he set out alone to complete his journey. It is strange to think how largely the course of modern history depended upon that solitary traveller, for had André reached New York, the plot would almost certainly have succeeded, and the American Revolution been crushed. He had not, however, proceeded far, when he was stopped by three young men, who were playing cards near the road. They have been called militiamen, but appear, according to better accounts, to have been members of a party who were engaged in cattle-stealing for their own benefit. Had André produced at once his pass, he would probably have been allowed to proceed in safety, but in the confusion of the moment he believed that the men were British, and he proclaimed himself a British officer. Finding his mistake, he then produced his pass, but his captors at once proceeded to search him, and though they found little or no money, they discovered the papers in his boots, and although André promised that they would obtain a large reward if they released him, or took him to New York, they determined to carry him to the nearest American outpost.[1] Colonel Jamieson, who commanded there, recognised the handwriting of Arnold, but he did not realise the treachery of his chief, and he sent a letter to Arnold, informing

[1] There is some controversy about the character of the captors of André and the incidents of his seizure. The reader will find an examination of the subject in an interesting note to Jones's *History of New York*, i. 730-736.

him that papers of a very compromising character had been found on a person just arrested, who carried a pass signed by the General. The papers were sent on to Washington, who was now returning from Hartford.

Arnold was expecting the arrival of Washington, and his house was filled with company when the letter, announcing the arrest of André, arrived. For a moment he is said to have changed countenance, but he quickly recovered himself, rose from the table, and telling his guests that he had an immediate call to visit one of the forts at the opposite side of the river, he ordered a horse to be at once brought to the door. He called his wife upstairs, and, after a short interview, left her in a fainting condition, mounted his horse, galloped at full speed down the steep descent to the river, and, springing into a barge, ordered the boatmen to row him to the middle of the stream. They obeyed his command, and he then told them to row swiftly to the 'Vulture.' He was going there, he said, with a flag of truce, and as he must be back in time to receive Washington, there was not a moment to be lost. As he passed the American batteries he waved a white handkerchief as a sign of truce, and in a short time, and before any rumours of his treason were abroad, he stood on the deck under the British flag.

He wrote, shortly after, more than one letter and address, declaring that the motive of his conduct was a detestation of the French alliance, and that he only desired to restore America to peace and true liberty, and to fulfil what he knew to be the secret wish of a great majority of his countrymen. It is not surprising, however, that neither contemporaries nor posterity have attached the smallest weight to these declarations. That the position of an American loyalist was in itself a perfectly upright one, will hardly indeed be questioned in England, and will, I should hope, be now admitted

by all reasonable men beyond the Atlantic, and it is probably below the truth to say that a full half of the more honourable and respected Americans were either openly or secretly hostile to the revolution. There was also nothing strange or dishonourable in men who had zealously espoused the revolution in its earlier stages, passing, after the legislation of 1778 and after the French alliance, into the opposite camp. Every grievance the Americans had put forward as a reason for taking up arms had been redressed; every claim they had resented had been abandoned, and from the time when the English Parliament surrendered all right of taxation and internal legislation in the colonies, and when the English Commissioners laid their propositions before the Americans, the character of the war had wholly changed. It was no longer a war for self-taxation and constitutional liberty. It was now an attempt, with the assistance of France and Spain, to establish independence by breaking up and ruining the British empire. It may also be readily admitted that it is probable that the early Whig convictions of Arnold had evaporated under the influence of the society in which he had lately been living. Expressions dropped by him were afterwards repeated which seemed to imply that he regretted sincerely the continuance of the war and the connection with France, and an unsigned letter addressed to him, urging, in very powerful language, the importance on purely public grounds of putting a speedy end to the war, was found among his papers. But, when all this is said, the conduct of a ruined and desperate soldier, who, having been placed, by the full confidence of his superior, in command of military posts of the first importance, bargains with the enemy to surrender them for money, will admit of no justification and very little palliation. Arnold escaped from his many creditors in America. He received from the

British Government a sum of about 6,300*l.*, and he was appointed colonel of a British regiment with the brevet of brigadier-general; but he carried with him into his new service the brand not only of failure, but of indelible disgrace, and his feelings must have been doubly poignant when he learned that the gallant soldier whom he had led within the American lines had expiated his conduct on the gibbet.

The execution of Major André is, indeed, one of the saddest episodes of the American war, and in the judgment of many it left a deep stain on the reputation of Washington. The victim was well fitted to attract to himself a halo of romantic interest. Though only twenty-nine, he had already shown the promise of a brilliant military career. He was a skilful artist; and the singular charm of his conversation, and the singular beauty of his frank, generous, and amiable character, endeared him to all with whom he came in contact, and was acknowledged by no one more fully than by those American officers with whom he spent the last sad days of his life. Nothing could be more dignified, more courageous, more candid, and at the same time more free from everything like boasting or ostentation, than his conduct under the terrible trial that had fallen upon him, and it is even now impossible to read without emotion those last letters in which he commended to his country and his old commander the care of his widowed mother, and asked Washington to grant him a single favour—that he might die the death of a soldier and not of a spy. At the same time it is but justice to remember that he suffered under the unanimous sentence of a board consisting of fourteen general officers, and that two of these—Steuben and Lafayette—were not Americans. Nor can the justice of the sentence in my opinion be reasonably impugned. An enemy who was in the camp for the purpose of plotting with the com-

mander for a corrupt surrender, and who passed through the lines in a civilian dress, under a false name, and with papers conveying military intelligence to the enemy, did unquestionably, according to the laws of war, fall under the denomination of a spy, and the punishment awarded to spies was universally recognised and had been inflicted by both sides in the present war.

The argument by which the English commander endeavoured to evade the conclusion seems to me destitute of all real force. Arnold, he said, whatever might be his faults, was undoubtedly the duly constituted commander at Westpoint. Everything André did was done at his invitation or under his direction. As general he had a full right to give passes; and a British officer who landed under a flag of truce which he had given,[1] who came to the camp at his request, who left it with his pass, and who, even in assuming a false name, was only acting by his direction, could not, according to the general custom and usage of nations, be treated as a spy. The obvious answer was that Arnold was at this time deliberately plotting the destruction of the Government which employed him, and that no acts which he performed with that object and for the purpose of sheltering an active colleague, could have any binding force

[1] There was much dispute about the flag of truce. Colonel Robinson wrote from the 'Vulture' to Washington that André 'went up with a flag at the request of General Arnold.' Arnold himself wrote that André was 'assuredly under the protection of a flag of truce sent by me to him for the purpose of a conversation which I requested,' and Clinton laid much stress on the same defence. On the other hand, although the boat to the 'Vulture' carried a passport describing it as sailing under a flag of truce, no such flag appears to have been actually displayed. The landing was effected with profound secrecy and in the dead of night, and André very imprudently admitted on his trial that he did not suppose that he had landed under the sanction of a flag. See *The Proceedings of the Board of General Officers respecting Major André.*

as against the Government which he betrayed. As a matter of strict right, the American sentence against André appears to me unassailable, and it is only on grounds of mercy and magnanimity that it can be questioned. One extremely strong palliating circumstance might be adduced. André had consented to an interview with Arnold only upon a distinct understanding and stipulation that he was not to enter the American lines. General Clinton had given him precise orders that he was not to do so, and was not to change his uniform; and André asserted, and the statement seems never to have been questioned or doubted, that when Arnold undertook to conduct him to Smith's house he was not aware that it was within the American lines, and learned it for the first time when they were challenged by the American sentinel and when it was too late to recede. This fact does, as it seems to me, materially affect the question, and it is much to be regretted that it did not induce Washington, at least to grant the request of André that he might die the death of a soldier. The English could also allege with truth that on their side they had not carried military law to its full severity. It was only by a very indulgent interpretation that General Lee could escape being treated as a deserter. The forty citizens of Charleston who, after they had given their parole to the English, had corresponded with the enemy, had in strict justice incurred a much more terrible penalty than a short banishment to Florida, and Sir Henry Clinton afterwards stated that he had in several cases 'shown the most humane attention to the intercession of Washington even in favour of avowed spies.'[1]

[1] See the narrative drawn up by Sir Henry Clinton, in the appendix to the seventh volume of Lord Stanhope's History. Lord Stanhope has stated with great force and perspicuity the case of those who consider the execution of André

There is, however, much to be said on this ground also for the Americans. As I have already observed, they have always been more free than the English from explosions of sanguinary fury, but the moment when the army was thrilling with indignation at an act of treason which had almost led to its complete destruction, was scarcely one in which the American general could, with any regard to the public sentiment, abate anything of the full legal punishment of the chief conspirator with the traitor. Nor should it be forgotten that Washington was as yet entirely ignorant of the extent of the plot. His first exclamation to Lafayette, on hearing of the treason, was, 'Whom then can we trust?' and there was great reason to fear that it might have spread among other leading officers. Was this a time when the risks of treason could be safely diminished, when any deterring circumstance in the just and legal punishment of traitors, or of spies, could be safely omitted? Washington, during his whole life, proved himself an eminently humane, as well as an eminently wise man; and his letters appear to show that he acted with an unclouded mind, and on a deliberate conviction of the necessity of the case.[1] It has been said that the American generals were usually uneducated men, that their opinion on a difficult question of military law was

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criminal. Mr. Sparks has given an admirably full and fair account of the whole transaction in his *Life of Arnold*.

[1] These are the words in which Washington himself announced the transaction to Count Rochambeau: 'Your Excellency will have heard of the execution of the British Adjutant-General. The circumstances under which he was taken justified it, and policy required a sacrifice; but as he was more unfortunate than criminal, and as there was much in his character to interest, while we yielded to the necessity of rigour, we could not but lament it.'—Washington's *Works*, vii. 241. 'André,' he wrote to Colonel Laurens, 'has met his fate, and with that fortitude which was to be expected from an accomplished man and gallant officer.'—Ibid. p. 256.

of little value, and that the English proposal to submit the matter to the joint decision of Rochambeau and Knyphausen ought to have been accepted. But the sentence of the board of generals which condemned André remains, and no document could be more temperate or better reasoned. The Americans, in truth, in this very trying moment showed themselves singularly free from sanguinary passion; and the deep compassion for André expressed by high officers in the American camp, and the unvarying humanity and respect shown to Mrs. Arnold and her child, are a most honourable proof that they had not lost the power of judging with equity and calm.[1]

On the whole, I must acknowledge myself unable to subscribe to the condemnation which many English writers have passed upon the conduct of Washington and the other American generals in this matter. The action of Washington, indeed, in another transaction connected with the treason of Arnold, which has received a far smaller share of public notice, appears to me to press much more closely upon that obscure and wavering line which separates in time of war the lawful from the treacherous. A plan was formed in the American camp for abducting Arnold, so as to bring him into the power of the Americans. It was proposed that an American, pretending to be a deserter, should endeavour to win his confidence and obtain some menial position in his service, and that some night, when the oppor-

[1] The testimony of Alexander Hamilton, who saw André during his last days, is very remarkable. He says: 'Never perhaps did any man suffer death with more justice or deserve it less.' 'Among the extraordinary circumstances that attended him, in the midst of his enemies he died universally esteemed and universally regretted.' Hamilton confesses, however, in another letter, that 'the refusing him the privilege of choosing the manner of his death will be branded with too much obstinacy.'—Hamilton's *Works*, i. 172–182, 187.

tunity served, he should, with the assistance of a confederate in the English camp, seize and gag the general, and drag him within the American lines. I think that most admirers of Washington will regret that he fully approved of this plot, and gave money for its accomplishment, though with the reservation that Arnold must not be assassinated, but brought in alive.[1] The Americans were so anxious to obtain possession of Arnold that they had actually made the strange and shocking proposal that the English should surrender him as a price for the release of André. It was a proposal to which, of course, there could be but one answer among honourable men.[2]

There had been great hopes in America that the campaign of 1780 would prove the last, and that, with the powerful assistance of France, it would be possible, and even easy, in that year to annihilate the English army on the Continent. In fact, however, with the exception of the campaign in the Southern provinces, in which the balance of success was greatly in favour of the English, the year in America was, in a military point of view, almost uneventful. The combined enterprises, indeed, of the French and Americans had hitherto been singularly unsuccessful. The attack on Rhode Island had failed. The attack on Savannah had failed, and the expedition against New York had been abandoned. The legion of the Duke of Lauzun was stationed in Connecticut, but all the other French troops remained in Rhode Island, where their chief service to the cause was the purchase of their supplies with hard coin, which helped in some considerable degree to restore the exhausted currency of specie.[3] The English went into winter quarters

[1] Washington's *Works*, vii. 269–273. 545–547.

[2] Sparks's *Life of Arnold*, pp.

[3] Hildreth, iii. 330.

at New York and its dependencies, and the Americans on some high grounds bordering on the North river. In spite of the forced requisitions of food which the Americans now systematically made, the contrast between the situation of the troops who were supposed to be the liberators and of the troops who were supposed to be the oppressors of America continued to be very mortifying. 'While our army is experiencing almost daily want,' wrote Washington, 'that of the enemy in New York is deriving ample supplies from a trade with the adjacent States of New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut, which has by degrees become so common that it is hardly thought a crime.' The readiness, indeed, of the farmers to supply the English with everything they could want, in defiance of the prohibitions of the revolutionary conventions, was so great that the army of Clinton had become almost independent of the supplies that were sent by sea.[1]

A few miscellaneous American matters of some importance were accomplished during this year. Congress, recognising that the war was not yet over, again re-

[1] Washington's *Works*, vii. 286, 287. When the Americans had gone into winter quarters Washington wrote to General Greene: 'I have been driven by necessity to discharge the levies; want of clothing rendered them unfit for duty, and want of flour would have disbanded the whole army if I had not adopted this expedient for the relief of the soldiers for the war.'—Ibid. p. 321.

'L'esprit de patriotisme,' wrote Count Fersen at this time, 'ne réside que chez les chefs et les principaux du pays, qui font de très-grands sacrifices. Les autres qui forment le plus grand nombre ne pensent qu'à leur intérêt personnel. . . . Les habitants des côtes, même les meilleurs Whigs, apportent à la flotte Anglaise mouillée dans Gardiner's Bay des provisions de toute espèce, et cela parcequ'on les paie bien; ils nous écorchent impitoyablement. . . . Dans tous les marchés que nous avons conclus avec eux ils nous ont traités plutôt comme ennemis que comme amis. Ils sont d'une cupidité sans égale. . . . Je parle de la nation en général. Je crois qu'elle tient plus des Hollandais que des Anglais.'—*Lettres de Comte Fersen*, i. 51.

organised the army on a plan which was calculated to produce 36,000 men, though in truth there were never half that number in the field; and, in two important respects, the urgent representations which Washington had for several years been making were at length attended to. The soldiers were to be enlisted to the end of the war, and the officers, who served to that period, were promised half-pay not merely for seven years, as had been decided in 1778, but for life.[1] The first measure had become less difficult, as it was evident that the war was near its close. The second measure, which was an act of the barest justice and gratitude to men who had sacrificed very much in the American cause, was carried with some difficulty in the face of the opposition of Samuel Adams. A considerable exchange of prisoners was made, and the English were anxious to release in this way the old troops of General Burgoyne, who, in spite of the Convention of Saratoga, had been so long and so dishonourably detained. The Americans, however, though they were ready to exchange the officers, considered the detention of the privates favourable to their interests, and they were accordingly kept in captivity till the end of the war.[2]

The financial difficulty was, as always, the most pressing, and, when it became certain that another campaign must be undergone, Washington ventured to say little more than that the cause was not absolutely desperate.[3] The immense issue of paper money in 1779 had made it almost worthless, and intelligent men clearly saw that bankruptcy could not long be averted. The plan of calling on the different States to supply the army in kind, by sending fixed quantities of provisions and clothing, was largely employed; but, as we have

[1] Hildreth, iii. 324.

[2] Stedman, iv. 254. Washington's *Works*, vii. 288.

[3] See a striking passage in Washington's *Works*, vii. 229.

seen, it was far from successful, and it gave rise to an immense amount of embezzlement. Strenuous efforts were made to obtain loans in Spain and in Holland, but very little could in this year be obtained from Spain and nothing from Holland. France, however, though her own finances could ill afford it, continued steadily to support America, and her assistance was as indispensable in finance as in arms. But for a loan of four millions of livres granted by France in this year, and for the large sums expended by her army in America, it is difficult to see how the contest could have been continued.

At the end of 1779, Congress issued a powerful address to the States, in which, while calling for new exertions, it endeavoured to dispel all fears that America would not ultimately redeem the promises of its paper money. 'A bankrupt, faithless republic would be a novelty in the political world, and appear among respectable nations like a common prostitute amongst chaste and respectable matrons. The pride of America revolts from the idea; her citizens know for what purposes these emissions were made, and have repeatedly pledged their faith for the redemption of them.'[1] Unfortunately, in little more than three months after these brave words were written, the apprehended bankruptcy came. It took the form of a Bill calling in the existing continental paper by monthly payments, and replacing it by a new issue based on the credit of the States, at a discount of forty dollars of the old emissions for one of the new. This new paper was to be redeemed in specie within six years, and it bore interest at the rate of five per cent. By this measure, forty dollars of the continental currency was made an equivalent for one dollar in specie, and the old paper currency ceased to circulate.[2]

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[1] Bolles, pp. 86, 87; Ramsay, ii. 129.

[2] Bolles, pp. 94, 135, 217–220.

It is not surprising that after this shock to public faith the new issue had little security, though more serious efforts than in former years were now made to face the financial difficulties. Heavy taxation was imposed by the different States. A movement began among the ladies of Philadelphia, and spread through other States, of collecting or making clothes for the half-naked soldiers, and a bank was erected, chiefly by private subscriptions, for the purpose of helping the Government.[1] But for the assistance of France, however, the financial condition of America would have been desperate, and, in spite of that assistance, it was little less. The expenses were cut down as much as possible. A new wave of ruin swept over large classes as 39-40ths of the old currency were simply sponged out. The French themselves were extremely irritated by a measure which affected the many French creditors who had supplied the Americans in the time of their deepest need with articles of the first necessity, and Vergennes expressed a strong opinion that foreigners ought to have been excepted from its operation.[2] The new paper soon became almost worthless, and the condition of the army at the end of the year was worse than ever. Hamilton, whose great financial genius was now becoming apparent in American politics, wrote, in December 1780, from Morristown, where the army was in winter quarters: 'I find our prospects are infinitely worse than they have been at any period of the war, and unless some expedient can be instantly adopted, a dissolution of the army for want of subsistence is unavoidable. A part of it has been again several days without bread; and for the rest we have not, either on

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[1] See on these different measures Bolles's *Financial History of the United States.*

[2] See Adams' *Works*, vii. 190–192.

the spot or within reach, a supply sufficient for four days. Nor does this deficiency proceed from accidental circumstances, as has been the case on former occasions, but from the absolute emptiness of our magazines everywhere, and the total want of money or credit to replenish them.'[1] 'A foreign loan,' wrote Washington in the preceding month, 'is indispensably necessary to the continuance of the war. Congress will deceive themselves if they imagine that the army, or a State that is the theatre of war, can rub through a second campaign as the last. . . . Ten months' pay is now due to the army. Every department of it is so much indebted, that we have not credit for a single express, and some of the States are harassed and oppressed to a degree beyond bearing. To depend, under these circumstances, upon the resources of the country, unassisted by foreign loans, will, I am confident, be to lean upon a broken reed.'[2]

If England and America had been alone engaged in the contest, I scarcely think that any impartial judge can doubt that the Revolution would have been subdued; though, if the American people had ever been animated by a serious and general desire to detach themselves from England, it would have been utterly impossible to have kept them permanently in subjection. England, however, was now struggling with a confederation which might well have beaten the strongest Power in Europe to the dust. The efforts of the minis-

[1] Quoted by Bolles, pp. 99, 100.

[2] Washington's *Works*, vii, 300. In the same spirit Hamilton wrote in 1780: 'As to a foreign loan, I dare say Congress are doing everything in their power to obtain it. The most effectual way will be to tell France that without it we must make terms with Great Britain. This must be done with plainness and firmness, but with respect and without petulance; not as a menace, but as a candid declaration of our circumstances.'—Hamilton's *Works*, i. 161.

try to restore the navy to its full efficiency had been earnest, skilful, and successful; but one of the worst signs of the time was the degree in which, during the conflicts between Keppel and Palliser, party spirit had passed into its ranks. Still the old prowess of the sailors was unimpaired; and if they could not save their country from grievous loss, they at least saved it from ruin and from disgrace. In December 1779 the command of a considerable portion of the navy passed into the hands of one who was in some respects, at least, a worthy successor of that long line of illustrious seamen to whom England owed so much of her greatness in the world.[1] Rodney was one of the many men of brilliant capacity who had been brought into the front rank by Pitt during the great French war. He had bombarded Havre and destroyed the preparations for an invasion of England in 1759, and he commanded the squadron which, in the beginning of 1762, captured Martinique, St. Lucia, St. Vincent, and Grenada. He afterwards became a baronet, vice-admiral, and member of Parliament; but he ruined himself at the gambling-table, and was obliged to fly to France from his creditors. The story that he was offered high rank in the French navy appears to rest on no good authority; but it is certainly true that it was a distinguished Frenchman—the Marshal de Biron—who, by a timely loan, extricated him from his most pressing difficulties, and enabled him to return to England. He was a somewhat vain and boasting man without any high principle, and a complete slave to women and to play; but on sea he ever showed himself almost recklessly daring in seeking danger, and eminently prompt, skilful, and self-possessed when encountering it. He was now appointed to the command of the fleet in the West Indies,

[1] Adolphus, iii. 156.

and was directed on his way to relieve Gibraltar, which was still blockaded by the Spaniards. In addition to the ships intended for the West Indies, a part of the Channel fleet accompanied him as far as Gibraltar.

The voyage was brilliantly successful. A few days after his departure he encountered a fleet of fifteen Spanish merchant ships, chiefly laden with provisions, and escorted by seven ships of war, and he succeeded in capturing them all. About a week later he fell in near Cape St. Vincent with a Spanish squadron of eleven ships of the line and two frigates under the command of Don Juan Langara. The English greatly outnumbered the Spaniards, so the latter had no resource but flight. The night was fast falling in, and it appeared hopeless to continue the pursuit in the dark, in a furious gale and along a most dangerous coast. Rodney determined, however, to do so. He fought a kind of running battle, which continued till two in the morning, and he succeeded, without losing a single ship of his own, in destroying or capturing seven ships of the line. Gibraltar was then relieved at a time when its provisions had run so low that it must very soon have surrendered; the cargoes of the recently captured ships were employed to replenish its stores; and Rodney then proceeded to the West Indies, while the division from the Channel fleet returned to England, with some French vessels that it encountered on its homeward voyage, and brought no less than six captured ships of the line to strengthen the navy at home.

In the West Indies, however, nothing decisive was this year done. There had been some isolated combats between English and French ships, in which much gallantry was displayed, and even before Rodney arrived, the English, though greatly outnumbered by the French, did serious damage to French commerce. The arrival of Rodney made the opponents nearly equal; but Count

de Guichen for a long time avoided an action, and when he at last fought one, he selected a position which enabled him, as soon as his ships had been considerably injured, to take shelter under the batteries of Guadaloupe. The arrival of a Spanish fleet soon after gave the enemy a decisive superiority in the West Indies; but it led to no important result. Sickness raged in the Spanish fleet. Many of the French ships were seriously injured, and the two commanders did not work cordially together. The appearance of De Guichen in America had been looked forward to as likely to give the Americans such a naval superiority as would render possible an attack upon New York; but De Guichen now returned to France with a convoy of merchant ships. The Spaniards proceeded to Havannah, and Rodney sailed for New York.

Sir Charles Hardy, who in the preceding year commanded the English Channel fleet, died this year, and the command passed first to Admiral Geary, and on his resignation to Admiral Darby. This fleet did not, however, come in conflict with the enemy, and it accomplished little or nothing except the capture of some French merchantmen. The French and Spanish fleets joined, as in the preceding year; but, instead of entering the British Channel, they judiciously scattered themselves over the tract of sea through which the outward-bound trade of Great Britain to the East and West Indies usually passed, and they succeeded in inflicting upon England the greatest disaster she experienced during the year. A fleet of merchants and transports for the West Indies, and another for the East Indies, had sailed together under a small convoy from Portsmouth towards the end of July, and on August 8 they fell in with a division of the combined French and Spanish fleet. The convoy and a few merchantmen succeeded in escaping; but more than forty

ships—many of them laden with naval and military stores urgently required in the East and West Indies—were captured and brought in triumph to Cadiz. Another great disaster occurred this year off Newfoundland, where some American privateers intercepted the outward-bound Quebec fleet. Several of the vessels were afterwards recaptured, but fourteen valuable ships were secured by the enemy.

While these things were happening the area of hostility to England was rapidly extending, and two most formidable additions had been made to the dangers which already menaced her. At the beginning of the war the Northern Powers, but especially the Empress of Russia, had leaned decidedly to her side, and the probability of their assisting her had more than once thrown a dark shadow over the minds of American statesmen and diplomatists. At the same time, although the Northern Powers had no sympathy for America, and very little for France, there existed among them, as among all other nations, much jealousy of the complete naval ascendency which England had obtained under Chatham. As early as 1778, both Vergennes and several of the minor maritime Powers had asked the Russian Empress to place herself at the head of a movement to restrict the English pretensions to interfere in time of war with the commerce of neutral nations; but their efforts had little success.[1] Catherine

[1] See the letter of Vergennes in Circourt, iii. 223-225. On December 31, 1778, Mr. Harris wrote to Lord Suffolk that Count Panin had told him 'that he was obliged to express her Imperial Majesty's wishes, that we should put a little more circumspection in our mode of proceeding against the ships of neutral States; that we should otherwise irritate Powers now well disposed towards us; that Denmark, Sweden, and Holland had respectively solicited the Empress to join with them in a representation to us on this subject; and, although I might be assured of her moving with the greatest delicacy in whatever would give us pain, yet he must candidly confess she could not see with

distinguished Harris, who represented England at the Court of Russia, by her special favour; she uniformly expressed her strong sympathies with the English cause, and she was at one time all but induced to enter into an active alliance with England. At her Court there were two rival parties, headed respectively by Panin and by Potemkin. The first was completely in the interests of Frederick of Prussia, and like that potentate very hostile to England. Potemkin, on the other hand, leaned towards the English alliance, but he seems to have been open to the offers of the highest bidder, and the real motive of his policy was a desire to depress his rival. The intellect and political knowledge of the Empress made her quite capable of taking her own line, and when she had fully decided on a course, she could pursue it with high courage and with an inflexible determination; but her will had of late been somewhat enfeebled by long-continued debauchery, and she was more frequently governed than of old by sudden gusts of anger, passion, or caprice.

It does not appear that she was ever really hostile to England, although she adopted a line of policy extremely injurious to that country. The English had given orders, which were strictly obeyed, that Russian ships should never be molested; but the Spaniards not only searched, but captured, two Russian ships, which they erroneously imagined to be trading with England. Catherine was extremely angry, and ordered a number of Russian ships of war to be at once equipped to

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indifference the commerce of the North so much molested as it was by our privateers. That the vague and uncertain definition given by us to naval and warlike stores exposed almost all the productions of these parts to be sequestered; and that it became the Empress, as a leading Power on this side Europe, to expostulate with us and express her desire that some alteration might be made in our regulations on this article.'—*Malmesbury Diaries*, i. 220.

protect Russian commerce. She appeared determined, if not to enter into the war, at least to make a demonstration against Spain, which would be so threatening that it would have detained a great part of the Spanish fleet in its harbours.

Frederick, however, succeeded in inducing the Spaniards to restore the vessels without any delay, and with an ample apology, and Panin dexterously made use of the occurrence to persuade the Empress to place herself at the head of a Congress for defining the rights of neutrals, in a manner which would prevent the recurrence of such an incident as had just taken place, would greatly favour neutral and minor Powers, but would at the same time be extremely injurious to English interests. The doctrine of maritime law which England had steadily asserted was that which Vattel laid down when he maintained that 'the effects belonging to an enemy found on board a neutral ship are seizable by the rights of war;'[1] in other words, that a belligerent Power must not be allowed to carry on its commerce in safety in neutral bottoms or under a neutral flag. To enforce this position, the English had always strenuously maintained their right of search, and they had sometimes unduly extended their right of blockade to coasts and harbours which were in fact very imperfectly beleaguered by their ships. In March 1780 the Empress of Russia issued a declaration to the belligerent Powers in which she laid down four propositions as the first principles of maritime law on the questions at issue. They were, that neutral vessels may navigate freely from harbour to harbour and along the coasts of countries that are at war; that all goods of belligerents which are not contraband may be lawfully carried in neutral vessels; that those articles only are contraband which are expressly enumerated as such in

[1] *Droit des Gens*, bk. iii. § 115.

the treaty of commerce between England and Russia; and that a harbour is not blockaded except when the enemy's ships are sufficiently near to make it evidently dangerous to enter it. All judgments, the declaration added, relating to the legality of prizes must for the future be determined by these rules, and the Empress announced her intention of employing her fleet to protect her commerce in accordance with them.[1]

The questions at issue, considered as matters of argument, can hardly be decided except by an appeal to history; and on one point, and that the most important, the Russian declaration was a complete innovation upon the ancient maritime law of Europe. The right of a belligerent to confiscate all goods belonging to an enemy found on neutral vessels had been fully recognised in the Consolato del Mare, which chiefly regulated the maritime law of the Middle Ages. It appears then to have been undisputed, and it is not too much to say that it had been asserted and acted on in more modern times by every considerable naval Power. An ordinance of Lewis XIV., indeed, in 1681, went much beyond the English doctrine, and asserted, in accordance with what is said to have been the earlier French practice, the right of a belligerent to confiscate any neutral vessel containing an enemy's goods; and this was the received French doctrine for the next sixty-three years, and the received Spanish doctrine for a considerably longer period. In 1744, however, a new French ordinance adopted the English rule that the goods, but the goods only, were liable to confiscation. Holland, in her practice and her professions, had hitherto agreed with England, and the right of a belligerent to confiscate an enemy's property in neutral ships was clearly laid down in the beginning of the eighteenth

[1] *Malmesbury Diaries*, i. 291.

century by Bynkershoek, the chief Dutch authority on maritime law. Russia herself, during her late war with the Turks, had systematically confiscated Turkish property in neutral vessels.[1]

The importance to any great naval Power of stopping the commerce of its enemy, and preventing the influx of indispensable stores into its harbours, was so manifest that it is not surprising that it should have been insisted on; and it is equally natural that neutral Powers which had no naval ascendency should have disliked it, and should have greatly coveted the opportunity which a war might give them of carrying on in their own ships the trade of the belligerents. The doctrine that free ships make free goods appears to have been first put forward in a Prussian memorial in 1752, at a time when Prussian merchantmen had begun, on some considerable scale, to carry on trade for the Powers which were then at war; but it never received any sanction from the great maritime Powers till France, with the object of injuring England, adopted it in 1778. The accession of Russia in 1780 at once gave it an almost general authority. Denmark and Sweden immediately acceded to the league, and nearly all the other neutral Powers joined it in the next two years. France and Spain both professed their adhesion to it; but England, without directly disputing it, dryly answered, that the King had always acted 'towards friendly and neutral Powers according to their own procedure respecting Great Britain, and conformable to the clearest principles generally acknowledged as the law of nations;' that England had treated, and would treat, Russian commerce with every consideration, and that the English Courts of Admiralty would decide any question that arose with strict equity.[1]

[1] *Malmesbury Diaries*, i. 306, 307.

[1] *Annual Register*, 1780, 349, 355. See, too, on this subject,

Although no war resulted from the armed neutrality, it was extremely unfavourable to the interests of England. It arrayed the greater part of Northern Europe in diplomatic hostility to her, it deprived her of all prospect of assistance from Russia, and it greatly increased the probability of an extended war. Fortunately, however, the Empress had no wish to engage in a contest. She continued attached to the armed neutrality rather through pride than through affection, and she herself candidly told Sir J. Harris that it ought rather to be called an armed nullity than an armed neutrality.[1]

The second event which was very hostile to England in this year was the breach with Holland. The justice or injustice of that breach involves very difficult and intricate questions of public law, and I must content myself with giving a brief summary of the real and ostensible reasons of the step. The Dutch had from the beginning of the war been divided into two parties —the party of the Stadholder, which was on the whole favourable to the English, and extremely anxious to maintain a strict neutrality, and the party of the Pensionary and City of Amsterdam, which was vehemently anti-English, and in a great measure under French influence. At the same time a country, which was essentially a country of merchants, and in which a smuggling trade with other Powers had attained a great development, was certain to avail itself largely of the opportunities opened by the war, and to look forward with some eagerness to the chances of ultimately obtaining a share in the legitimate commerce of America. In spite of some formal prohibitions by the Dutch

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Halleck's *International Law*, ii. 308-312; Trescot's *Diplomacy of the Revolution*; Block, *Dict. de la Politique*, art. 'Neutralité.'

[1] *Malmesbury Diaries*, i. 355.

Government, the little island of St. Eustatius had, since the beginning of the war, carried on an enormous trade in military and other stores with America, and had risen in consequence from a place of perfect insignificance to the importance of a great commercial centre. At the same time, the Dutch had no wish to quit their neutrality, and the American negotiators sometimes expressed no small exasperation at the failure of their attempts to induce the Dutch merchants to lend them money on very indifferent security. In February 1779, however, William Lee noticed that Amsterdam was steadily urging Holland into hostility with Great Britain.[1] France allowed the Dutch to carry on a free traffic with her in naval stores during the war, but she insisted that this offer should be either formally accepted or declined. It was declined, and the French then repealed the permission given to Holland to trade with her duty free, with the exception of Amsterdam, which retained this privilege 'in consideration of the patriotic exertions made by that city to persuade the Republic to procure from the Court of London the security of that unlimited commerce which belonged to the Dutch flag.' The permission was afterwards extended to Haarlem, and then to the whole province of Holland, and France appears to have depended more upon Holland than upon any other country for those articles which were required for constructing and equipping her ships.[2]

In the meantime, the feeling between England and Holland was growing rapidly worse, and the English and Dutch sailors, who had always been bitterly jealous of each other, and who had contended with no unequal competition in many fields of war and commerce, were in a state approaching frenzy. It is somewhat difficult

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[1] American *Diplomatic Correspondence*, ii. 335–338.

[2] Adolphus, iii. 210.

to apportion fairly the amount of blame, but it is certain that much was done on both sides tending to war. The Dutch were unquestionably carrying on an enormous trade, both in contraband articles and in other articles, with the enemies of England, and they were doing so at a time when they were bound to England by no less than three subsisting treaties of alliance.[1] The English complained that Paul Jones had been allowed to bring his prizes into Dutch harbours, and to remain there for several weeks; that American privateers were fitted out with scarcely a semblance of concealment at St. Eustatius; and that this island had long been the chief source of American supplies. By the treaties of 1678 and 1716, between Great Britain and Holland, either Power might claim from the other armed assistance if attacked by the House of Bourbon. After the declaration of war by Spain, England, in her great need, made the claim, but it was wholly disregarded.

The Dutch, on the other hand, complained with great bitterness, and frequently with great justice, of the arrogant, lawless, and violent manner in which England exercised the right of search. By a treaty of 1674, it had been stipulated that, when either England or Holland was at war, the other Power should have full liberty to carry all goods, either of its own produce or manufacture, or of any other nation provided they were not contraband, and there was no restriction placed upon the trade of the nation which was at peace with the enemy of the nation which was at war. Quite apart, therefore, from the Russian contention that 'free bottoms make free goods,' Holland could plead a distinct treaty justification for her commerce with France. But the English, asserting sometimes that the treaty of 1674 was tacitly abrogated by the later treaties, which obliged Holland

[1] *Parl. Hist.* xxi. 1057.

to defend England by arms when she was attacked, sometimes that the whole coast of France must be considered under blockade, completely disregarded the claims of Dutch commerce.[1] Many Dutch ships were seized and detained, some justly as containing contraband goods, some unjustly for simply trading with France, or for carrying French property. On one occasion the English seized Dutch vessels that lay at anchor under the very guns of the Dutch fort on the little island of St. Martin. On another occasion they committed a similar act of violence on the Dutch coast.

The Dutch announced their intention of sending their ships under convoy, and they revived a doctrine which Sweden had put forward in the middle of the seventeenth century, that ships under convoy could not be searched without insult to the national flag. In January 1780 a merchant fleet, laden with naval stores for France, and convoyed by Count Bylandt, was encountered by a British squadron, under Admiral Fielding, who attempted to search it. The attempt was resisted. Several shots were fired, and several Dutch ships taken. After a long and angry correspondence, the English announced that, as the Dutch refused to furnish the aids that were demanded according to treaty, as they systematically supplied the enemies of England with ammunition and stores, and as they had resisted by force the English right of search, they could no longer claim the benefits of the alliance, and that the treaties between the two nations must be considered abrogated. The Dutch, on the other hand, now eagerly acceded to the armed neutrality, hoping that, under cover of the new doctrine, they could carry on their trade with France as freely as under the treaty of 1674.

It needed but a spark to kindle the war. In Sep-

[1] *Parl. Hist.* xxi. 998, 1064, 1065.

tember 1780 an English frigate captured, near Newfoundland, an American packet, and among the prisoners was no less a person than Henry Laurens, the late president of the Congress, who was now being sent over as an ambassador to Holland. He flung his papers overboard, but an English sailor sprang into the water and caught them before they sank. Among them was found the copy of a treaty of commerce and amity between Holland and the United States of America, framed and executed on the one hand, in the name of the magistracy of Amsterdam, by Van Berckel, the Pensionary of Amsterdam, and by a prominent Amsterdam merchant named Neufville, and on the other by John Lee, the American Commissioner. It was dated September 1778, a time when the treaties of alliance were in full force, and when no formal complaints appear yet to have been made against England; and it was accompanied by several letters showing that Laurens was on a mission to Holland, and that Holland was largely supplying America with munitions of war. It is true that the principal document committed only a single city—though the most important one in Holland—that it was merely a proposal to be concluded 'hereafter,' that it had not received the sanction of the States-General, and was therefore absolutely without legal validity; and that, as it was necessary for the validity of the treaty that the States should be unanimous, it would almost certainly not have been ratified until England herself had acknowledged the independence of America. Still it is not surprising that the discovery that as early as August 1778 the chief magistrates of Amsterdam had been engaged in a clandestine correspondence with the Americans, and that they had given instructions and full powers for negotiating a treaty of close amity with the revolted subjects of a Power with which Holland was connected by no less than three

treaties of intimate alliance, should have been regarded in England as a grave provocation. Two peremptory memorials were sent by his Majesty's ambassador at the Hague, demanding a formal disavowal of the conduct of the Amsterdam magistrates, a speedy satisfaction adequate to the offence, and an immediate and exemplary punishment of Van Berckel and his accomplices. The disavowal was readily conceded, but the reply to the demand for satisfaction and punishment was so dilatory and evasive that Sir Joseph Yorke was ordered to quit the Hague, and on December 20, 1780, England declared war against Holland.[1]

This declaration of war was treated by the English Opposition as a great crime, and many later writers have adopted the same view. It has been said, with much force, and with a large amount of truth, that a project of a treaty which was entirely unrecognised by the one Power that could give it validity was no sufficient reason for declaring war; that the House of Orange, and the large party connected with it, had shown themselves steadily favourable to England; that there was an evident wish on the part of the English ministers, at a time when, owing to the action of the Northern Powers, the question of neutral commerce had assumed a very dangerous aspect, to force on a quarrel with Holland on another ground upon which she might be unable to claim the assistance of those Powers; and that the unprotected condition of the rich commerce and colonies of Holland was the true secret of the popularity of the war. At the same time, in justice to England, the treaty of Van Berckel must be taken in conjunction with many previous grievances and provocations, with

[1] The official documents relating to these transactions, and also an excellent summary of the arguments on both sides, will be found in the *Annual Registers* of 1780 and 1781, and the debates on the subject in *Parl. Hist.* vol. xxi. should also be consulted.

the uniform and undisguised attitude of hostility which Amsterdam had consistently maintained, and especially with the undoubted fact that Holland was giving constant and most valuable assistance to two of the enemies of England. There is at least a presumption that no English ministers would, without what they believed to be serious reasons, declare war against Holland at a time when the naval supremacy of England was already trembling most doubtfully in the balance, when a great coalition was already in arms against her, and when she was threatened with the hostility of all the maritime Powers of the North. Holland was indeed, as a belligerent Power, not what she had been. The great growth of the commercial spirit, a long period of almost unbroken peace, a form of government which was peculiarly unfitted for decisive and concentrated action, grave internal dissensions, and the weakness of character of the existing Stadholder, had deprived her of much of her ancient consideration both in England and abroad. Her conduct in the war of 1744 had shown much feebleness, and her navy appears now to have been very inadequate for the protection of her commerce and her dominions. At the same time Dutch sailors were still, as they had always been, among the best in the world; and Holland, in proportion to her size, was perhaps the richest country in Europe. Her wealth, no doubt, made her very tempting as a prey, but it also made her not a little formidable as an enemy.

The aspect of affairs at the close of 1780 might indeed well have appalled an English statesman. Perfectly isolated in the world, England was confronted by the united arms of France, Spain, Holland, and America; while the Northern league threatened her, if not with another war, at least with the annihilation of her most powerful weapon of offence. At the same

time, in Hindostan, Hyder Ali was desolating the Carnatic and menacing Madras; and in Ireland the connection was strained to its utmost limit, and all real power had passed into the hands of a volunteer force which was perfectly independent of the Government, and firmly resolved to remodel the constitution. At home there was no statesman in whom the country had any real confidence, and the whole ministry was weak, discredited and faint-hearted. Twelve millions had been added this year to the national debt,[1] and the elements of disorder were so strong that London itself had been for some days at the mercy of the mob.

The curtain had seldom fallen on a darker or more ominous scene, and it was plain that the next year must bring with it ruin or deliverance. But the nation was not desponding, and a strange spirit of recklessness was abroad. 'The Dutch war,' says Walpole, 'was popular at least in the City, where the spirit of gaming had seized all ranks and nothing was thought of but privateering.'[2] It was noticed too that the Gordon riots had produced some reaction in favour of authority, and had thrown a last faint gleam of popularity over the ministers of the Crown.

The French began their operations in 1781 by a renewed attack upon Jersey, but it was even less fortunate than that which had been made two years before. A body of 800 Frenchmen succeeded, indeed, in landing unobserved in the middle of the night, in seizing the capital, St. Helier, and in extorting a capitulation from the captive Lieutenant-Governor; but Major Pierson, a young officer of under twenty-five, having speedily collected some militia, totally defeated the invaders and obliged them all to surrender as prisoners

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[1] *Annual Register*, 1780, p. 319. [2] *Last Journals*, ii. 438.

of war. He fell himself at the very moment of the victory which saved the island.

Another important enterprise of the beginning of the year was the relief of Gibraltar. The siege of that fortress had continued without interruption since July 1779, and it had been prosecuted with unremitting energy and with all the strength of the Spanish power. In June 1780 a desperate and skilful attempt had been made to destroy the little squadron which lay in the harbour. Six great fireships laden with combustibles, and connected with iron chains, were drawn up in the form of a crescent, floated, in the middle of a dark night, and with a favourable wind, into the bay, and steered against the ships in the New Mole, while three others were directed against other points. Behind them came a long line of row-boats and galleys filled with armed men, and these in turn were supported by the heavy ships of the Spanish fleet. The first stage of the enterprise was completely successful, and it was only at one o'clock in the morning that the British sailors became aware, by the sudden glare and explosions, of the danger that was bearing down upon them. With a quickness, daring, and presence of mind that had never been surpassed, they sprang into their boats, grappled with the burning fireships, towed them, in spite of the fire of the Spaniards, clear of the English vessels, and not only baffled the long-prepared design of the enemy, but obtained in the hulks of the captured ships a supply of fuel for which there was urgent need.

But an enemy more terrible than the Spaniards was soon again pressing upon the garrison. Since Rodney had relieved them in the beginning of 1780 no considerable supplies of provisions had been obtained. The Moors were now wholly on the side of the enemy, and all supplies from Barbary were cut off. Swarms of Spanish cruisers guarded every approach, and, except a

few small cargoes from Minorca, nothing arrived. Scurvy raged among the garrison, and provisions were at last so scanty that a speedy surrender had become inevitable, when the fleet of Admiral Darby appeared, in April 1781, and once more relieved the fortress. Then followed one of the most terrible bombardments yet known. For six weeks 170 cannon and 80 mortars poured their fire upon the town and fortifications, and it was estimated that more than 75,000 shot and more than 25,000 shells were thrown in. The town was almost destroyed, but the fortifications remained intact, and the siege continued during the whole of 1781 and a great part of the succeeding year. Its last important event in 1781 was a night sortie in November, when the besieged succeeded in blowing up some large magazines and destroying a long and powerful line of carefully constructed works which lay three-quarters of a mile from Gibraltar, and within a few hundred yards of Spanish lines mounted with 135 pieces of heavy artillery.[1]

The defence of Gibraltar is one of the most honourable pages of English history. One of the most dishonourable, in my opinion, is that which tells the events that followed the capture of St. Eustatius from the Dutch. This little island had been for a long time a free port, and it was a great centre of merchants of all nations. Many English traders existed among its population; they had especially gone there after the capture of the English neutral islands, and they had been encouraged to trade there by several English Acts of Parliament.[2] The island became a great depôt of merchandise, and the English, like all other customers, were frequently supplied,[3] but, owing to its situation, it was more used

[1] Drinkwater's *Siege of Gibraltar*. Mann's *Gibraltar and its Sieges*. Beatson's *Naval and Military Memoirs*, v.

[2] *Parl. Hist.* xxii. 232.

[3] Ibid. p. 233. Rodney, it is true, complained that he had once been refused cordage for his

by the Americans and by the French, and as these were by far the best customers they were especially popular among the merchants. It is certain that a very large proportion of the population of St. Eustatius were habitually engaged in supplying the Americans with munitions of war, that the governor had shown a great partiality for the Americans, and that the assistance of this island had contributed much to the continuance of the contest, though probably not so much as was afterwards alleged. Rodney described it as 'a nest of thieves,' and he declared that 'this rock, of only six miles in length and three in breadth, had done England more harm than all the arms of her most potent enemies, and alone supported the infamous American rebellion;'[1] and General Vaughan, who was united with Rodney in the expedition, estimated the value of St. Eustatius so highly as a depôt for the Americans that he predicted that its capture would 'prove the means of speedily putting an end to the American war.'[2]

After an unsuccessful attempt to capture the island of St. Vincent, Rodney and General Vaughan, by the express orders of the English Government, proceeded with a powerful force to St. Eustatius, where they arrived on February 3, 1781, and demanded an instant and unconditional surrender. The Dutch governor was at this time absolutely ignorant of the existence of a war between England and Holland. There were not more than fifty-five soldiers on the whole island, and there was no preparation whatever for defence. The surrender was, therefore, inevitable, and it was made at once and

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vessels on the ground that none was to be found on the island, and that this was proved after the capture to be untrue, but Burke offered to produce evidence showing its scarcity at that time. Compare Mundy's *Life of Rodney*, ii. 76, 77. *Parl. Hist.* xxii. 776, 777.

[1] Mundy's *Rodney*, ii. 97.

[2] Ibid. 216.

without a blow. The neighbouring and dependent islands of St. Martin and Saba were included, and the English seized in the harbour a Dutch frigate of thirty-eight guns, five smaller ships of war belonging to the Americans, and no less than 150 vessels of all denominations, many of them richly loaded. Another Dutch fleet of about thirty large merchant vessels laden with West India produce, which had left St. Eustatius thirty-six hours before the arrival of the English, under the convoy of a ship of war, was pursued and captured, and Admiral Crull, who commanded the Dutch ship of war, was killed in a most gallant attempt to defend his charge.

So far the conduct of the English was fully in accordance with the rights and usage of war, but the sequel of the story appears to me to justify the strongest condemnation that has been passed upon it. By the command of Rodney and Vaughan, not only all the public stores of St. Eustatius, but also all the private property of the inhabitants, was confiscated to the Crown. Such a sentence was utterly beyond the usages of modern warfare, and no parallel could be found to it in the proceedings of any European nation for at least fifty years. The confiscation was absolutely indiscriminating. It applied to men of all nationalities, and to stores of every description, even to those which could not possibly be employed for military purposes,[1] and it was carried out with savage severity. The warehouses were closed, and the former owners were not suffered to enter them to form an estimate of their property. Their books and inventories were seized, and most of the inhabitants of the island were banished. Rodney wrote with much complacency that, instead of being the greatest emporium on earth, the island would soon become a mere desert, known only by report.[2] Nor was this all. With

[1] *Parl. Hist.* xxii. 226.

[2] Mundy's *Life of Rodney*, ii. 97.

a treachery which ought to bring a blush to the cheek of every English historian, the Dutch flag was still suffered to float over St. Eustatius, in order that Dutch, French, Spanish, and American vessels, who were ignorant of the capture, might be decoyed into its harbour and become a prey to the captors, and in this manner a large amount of additional booty was secured.[1]

The proceedings of the English at St. Eustatius were brought before Parliament on two several occasions by Burke, in speeches of great ability and information, and although the Government fully adopted the conduct of the admiral, although on the second occasion both Rodney and Vaughan were present to defend themselves, I do not think that anyone who candidly reads the debates will question that on every essential point the charges of the Opposition were substantiated. Very little indeed was said in reply, except that the Americans had been largely and systematically supplied from St. Eustatius, that the confiscation had been originally made for the Crown, and not for the captors, though the Crown afterwards ceded the greater part of its rights,[2] and that in a few instances some property was subsequently restored. The goods that were seized at St. Eustatius were valued at little less than four millions sterling, and the blow was one of the most terrible that could be inflicted upon Holland. It was not, however, of corresponding value to the English. The stores were sold by auction to merchants from the neighbouring islands, at rates far below their real value, and a great part of them were bought by agents in the employment of the enemy. Twenty-five ships, laden with booty from St. Eustatius, were taken by a French squadron.

[1] Beatson, Adolphus, Stedman. On March 26, Rodney wrote that more than fifty American ships had been taken since the capture of the island.

[2] See Beatson's *Military Memoirs*, v. 178.

The seizure of the property of English merchants was afterwards pronounced by the law courts to have been illegal, and the island itself, towards the end of the year, was taken by the French.[1]

In addition to the loss of St. Eustatius the Dutch suffered very severely in 1781. They lost numerous merchantmen, and a few ships of war. In South America the colonies of Demerara, Essequibo, and Berbice were taken by English privateers, but the inhabitants were treated with much greater lenity than those of St. Eustatius. An expedition was sent against the Cape of Good Hope, but the French, anticipating the design, hastened to the assistance of their allies, and encountered the English near the Cape de Verd Islands. They were repulsed, but the English fleet was much damaged, and French troops having reinforced the Dutch at the Cape of Good Hope, the projected attack was abandoned. Negapatam, the great Dutch settlement on the Coromandel coast, was taken after much hard fighting, and between 6,000 and 7,000 men were compelled to surrender. The smaller Dutch settlements along this coast fell into the hands of the English; the Dutch settlements in Sumatra were reduced, and early next year the important fortress of Trincomalee in Ceylon was captured, but soon after retaken. One regular naval combat took place near the Dogger Bank

[1] See the very full debates on the subject, *Parl. Hist.* vol. xxii.; Beatson's *Military Memoirs*, v. 165, 179; Adolphus, iii. 259, 261; Mundy's *Life of Rodney*; Botta, *Storia della Guerra d'Indipendenza*, book xiii. Most of these books defend the conduct of Rodney, but the last cited writer gives what I believe to be a very true account of its enormity. When lawsuits were subsequently brought by English subjects, on account of property which they alleged to have been wrongfully confiscated, it was found that the books sent home from the island had disappeared from the Government offices, and Rodney maintained that those books contained the evidence of the guilt of many who were pleading for a restitution.

between an English fleet under Admiral Parker and a Dutch fleet under Admiral Zoutman. It showed that the Dutch had lost nothing of their ancient courage. No ships were taken on either side, and after three and a half hours of desperate but indecisive fighting, the two fleets, shattered, and in a great degree disabled, sullenly withdrew. The combat was described by the contemporary English historian as 'by far the hardest-fought battle of any that had yet happened by sea during the war.'[1] The Dutch vainly appealed to Russia for support, on the ground that their adhesion to the principle of maritime war which Russia had put forward had drawn them into the war, but the Russians denied the alleged fact and refused all assistance.[2]

The naval preparations of the French in this year were marked with great energy and success, and they at last gave a decisive turn to the war. Near the end of March, Admiral De Grasse sailed from Brest with twenty-five ships of the line, 6,000 soldiers, and a convoy amounting to between 200 and 300 ships. A small portion of the fleet was detached to serve in the East Indies, and it was this squadron which, as we have just seen, paralysed the English expedition against the Cape of Good Hope. The remainder proceeded to Fort Royal Bay in Martinique, where there was already a small French fleet, and where De Grasse arrived safely at the end of April in spite of the strenuous efforts of Sir Samuel Hood to intercept and to repel him. The French had now a complete naval ascendency in the West Indies, and having made an unsuccessful, or as some say, a pretended attempt upon St. Lucia, they attacked, and after a long and very gallant resistance, captured Tobago. It capitulated just two days before the arrival of a fleet under Rodney, which was intended to relieve

[1] Stedman, ii. 296.

[2] *Malmesbury Diaries*, i. 385.

it. Its loss was severely felt, for it produced the finest cotton imported into England; the price of cotton nearly doubled when it was taken, and there were already 20,000 operatives employed in Lancashire in the cotton manufacture.[1] The real object of De Grasse was, however, not in the West Indies. On July 5 he sailed for St. Domingo, where he was reinforced by five sail of the line, and at the close of the following month he arrived at the Chesapeake with twenty-eight ships of the line, several frigates, and the long-expected force of French soldiers who were to bring the American war to a close.

Before following, however, this last act of the drama, it will be convenient to dispose of the few remaining military operations of the year. The efforts of the Spaniards were chiefly concentrated upon Gibraltar, but they engaged in two other expeditions which proved much more successful. Their only real interest in North America was the reconquest of their old province of West Florida. Galvez, who was the Governor of the Spanish colony of Louisiana, had, as we have seen, in 1779 and 1780, made great progress in that enterprise, but Pensacola, the capital and strongest place of the province, was still in the possession of the English. Galvez went himself to Havannah to organise and command a great expedition against Pensacola. It sailed in the beginning of the year, but encountered one of those furious hurricanes which not unfrequently desolated the Cuban coasts, and four large ships with not less than 2,000 men were lost. The remainder of the fleet, being very seriously damaged, returned to Havannah, where it was speedily refitted, and it arrived before Pensacola with between 7,000 and 8,000 Spanish soldiers on March 9, 1781. The English, who were now in nearly all quarters of the world outnumbered, had

[1] *Parl. Hist.* xxii. 773.

only two small ships of war at Pensacola, and no succour was to be expected. General Campbell was in command, and he had a small and very miscellaneous force consisting of a few English soldiers, some fugitive loyalists from Maryland and Pennsylvania, and some Germans from Waldeck. The sailors of the two ships, the civil inhabitants, and the negroes all contributed to the defence, which was maintained very valiantly against overwhelming odds for two months. The blowing up of a great magazine at last made the town completely untenable. It surrendered on May 9, and thus the English lost their last hold on the province which had been reckoned among their most valuable acquisitions by the Treaty of Paris.

The other great Spanish undertaking of the year was the attack upon Minorca which was conducted in conjunction with France. It is a remarkable proof of the magnitude of the naval preparations of the French that having sent out one great fleet from Brest in March, they were able in the following June to send out a second fleet consisting of eighteen powerful vessels from the same port. It was commanded by the Count de Guichen; it joined without difficulty the Spanish fleet, and a large force of Spaniards and French was landed at Minorca, and proceeded to lay siege to its capital. The combined fleet then sailed for the English Channel with the object of preventing the departure of any troops for Minorca, of capturing the homeward-bound merchant ships, of spreading terrors of invasion both in England and in Ireland, and perhaps of crushing the English Channel fleet. It is said to have contained no less than forty-nine ships of the line, while the English fleet under Admiral Darby consisted of only twenty-one ships, though the number was afterwards raised to thirty. As it was impossible with any prospect of success to encounter the French and

Spaniards, Admiral Darby retired to Torbay, where he could defend himself with great advantage, and where the enemy did not venture to assail him. He afterwards, while still avoiding an action, sailed out to protect English merchantmen; and in September, many of the enemy's ships having become unseaworthy, the hostile fleet sailed to France and to Spain. For the second time during the war a fleet of the enemy had been for some weeks supreme in the English Channel, and for the second time it retired without any considerable result. In 1781, indeed, it is said not to have captured a single prize.[1]

In the meantime another field of hostility had been unexpectedly opened. The brilliant successes obtained by the English over the French in Hindostan at the beginning of the war had made all direct competition between the two nations in that country impossible, but it was still in the power of the French to stimulate the hostility of the native princes, and the ablest of all these, Hyder Ali, the great ruler of Mysore, was once more in the field. Since his triumph over the English in 1769, he had acquired much additional territory from the Mahrattas. He had immensely strengthened his military forces both in numbers and discipline, and at the same time improved the government and the revenue of the vast country which he ruled, and, though now an old man, he retained all his old sagacity and almost all his old fire. For some years he showed no wish to quarrel with the English, but when a Mahratta chief invaded his territory they refused to give him the assistance they were bound by the express terms of the treaty of 1769 to afford, they rejected or evaded more than one subsequent proposal of alliance, and they pursued a native policy in some instances hostile to his

[1] *Annual Register*, 1782, pp. 114–118.

interest. As a great native sovereign, too, he had no wish to see the balance of power established by the rivalry between the British and French destroyed, and he resented bitterly the capture of the French fort of Mahé which was on his own territory, and was, therefore, as he alleged, under his protectorate. Mysore was swarming with French adventurers. The condition of Europe made it scarcely possible that England could send any fresh forces, and Hyder Ali had acquired a strength which appeared irresistible. Ominous rumours passed over the land towards the close of 1779, but they were little heeded, and no serious preparations had been made, when in July 1780 the storm suddenly burst. At the head of an army of at least 90,000 men, including 30,000 horsemen, 100 cannon, many European officers and soldiers, and crowds of desperate adventurers from all parts of India, Hyder Ali descended upon the Carnatic and devastated a vast tract of country round Madras. Many forts and towns were invested, captured, or surrendered. The Nabob and some of his principal officers acted with gross treachery or cowardice, and in spite of the devastations native sympathies were strongly with the invaders. From Mount St. Thomas, which was only nine miles from Madras, the British officers could plainly see the tall columns of smoke that marked the lines of burning villages, and Madras was for a time in imminent danger.

A few forts commanded by British officers held out valiantly, but the English had only two considerable bodies of men, commanded respectively by Colonel Baillie and by Sir Hector Munro, in the field. They endeavoured to effect a junction, but Hyder succeeded in attacking separately the small army of Colonel Baillie, consisting of rather more than 3,700 men, and it was totally defeated, 2,000 men being left on the field. Munro only saved himself from a similar

fate by a rapid retreat, abandoning his baggage, and much of his ammunition. Arcot, which was the capital of the Nabob, and which contained vast military stores, was besieged for six weeks, and surrendered in the beginning of November. Velore, Wandewash, Permacoil, and Chingliput, four of the chief strongholds in the Carnatic, were invested. A French fleet with French troops was daily expected, and it appeared almost certain that the British power would be extinguished in Madras, if not in the whole of Hindostan.

It was saved by the energy of the Governor-General, Warren Hastings, who, by extraordinary efforts, collected a large body of Sepoys and a few Europeans in Bengal, and sent them with great rapidity to Madras under the command of Sir Eyre Coote, who had proved himself twenty years before scarcely second in military genius to Clive himself. I do not propose to relate in detail the long and tangled story of the war that followed. It extended much beyond the period described in the present volume, and, however important in itself, it had but little influence upon the general course of European and American warfare. It is sufficient to say that Coote soon found himself at the head of about 7,200 men, of whom 1,400 were Europeans; that he succeeded in relieving Wandewash, and obliging Hyder Ali to abandon for the present the siege of Velore; that the French fleet, which arrived off the coast in January 1781, was found to contain no troops, and that on July 1, 1781, Coote, with an army of about 8,000 men, totally defeated forces at least eight times as numerous, commanded by Hyder himself, in the great battle of Porto Novo.

The war, however, still continued over an ever-widening area, and with very varied success, and both the Dutch and the French were involved in it. I have already mentioned the capture, at the close of 1781, of the important Dutch settlement of Negapatam, near the southern border

of Tanjore, and in the following February the French succeeded in landing 2,000 troops to assist the forces of Hyder Ali. A French fleet hung long about the coast, and several severe but indecisive naval battles were fought in the Indian seas. The English were often thwarted and baffled, and their success seemed sometimes hopeless. The war raged over the Carnatic, over Tanjore, in the Dutch settlements to the south of Tanjore, on the opposite Malabar coast, and on the coast of Ceylon, while at the same time another and independent struggle was proceeding with the Mahrattas. The French were indefatigable in their efforts to obtain a naval ascendency on the coast, and their African islands gave them peculiar facilities for aggression. The English were enormously outnumbered, and, although the Sepoys under their flag proved themselves on this, as on many other critical occasions, most admirable in their courage, patience, and fidelity, there was great treachery and cowardice among natives in high positions under the English and the allied princes. England, struggling at home against overwhelming forces, could do little to assist her great dependency. The coffers at Calcutta were nearly empty, and it was in order to replenish them that Hastings committed some of the acts which were afterwards the subjects of his impeachment. There was dissension in the Government councils, and Sir Eyre Coote, though he was one of the greatest of the many great soldiers who have risen to glory in Hindostan, was now broken by illness, which appears, indeed, to have scarcely clouded his admirable military judgment, but which acted upon his nerves and temper in a manner that made all co-operation very difficult. By the skill and daring of a few able men, of whom Hastings, Coote, Munro, and Lord Macartney were the most prominent, the storm was weathered. Hyder Ali died in December 1782, about four months before Sir Eyre Coote. The

peace of 1782 withdrew France and Holland from the contest, and towards the close of 1783, Tippoo, the son of Hyder Ali, consented to negotiate a peace, which was signed in the following March. Its terms were a mutual restoration of all conquests, and in this, as in so many other great wars, neither of the contending parties gained a single advantage by all the bloodshed, the expenditure, the desolation, and the misery of a struggle of nearly four years.[1]

The exhaustion of the war was now felt very severely by all the belligerents in Europe, and several ineffectual attempts were made to terminate it, or at least to restrict its area, and to modify its conditions. The short war which broke out in Germany in 1778, about the Bavarian succession, had been terminated by the Peace of Teschen, which was signed on May 10, 1779, and immediately after, both Austria and Russia made a serious effort to mediate between the belligerent Powers. They proposed that, in order to save the pride of England, the negotiations with America should be conducted independently of those with the European Powers, but on the understanding that the two peaces should only be signed conjointly, and they also proposed that an immediate truce should be established; but no party was prepared to accept the terms. An abortive effort was made by England to secure the alliance of Russia by promising to her Minorca as the price of a peace based upon that of 1763,[2] and there was a long separate negotiation with Spain which failed through the determination of the English not to surrender Gibraltar.[3]

[1] See Wilkes's *Historical Sketches of the South of India*; Borrow's *Life of Lord Macartney*; Gleig's *Life of Munro*; *Annual Register*; Mill's *British India*.

[2] *Malmesbury Papers*, i. 399–404.

[3] Adolphus, iii. 187–195. See, too, the second volume of the *Memoirs of Richard Cumberland*, who was sent to Spain to negotiate this matter; and Flassan, *Hist. de la Diplomatie*, vi.

The acquisition of this fortress was the main object for which Spain had entered into the war, and the Spanish ministers now regretted deeply the step they had taken. Minorca, Gibraltar, and Jamaica were still in the hands of the English, though the first was not far from its fall. The capture of Florida was a matter of comparatively small moment, and the independence of America, which seemed likely to be the chief result of the war, was regarded at Madrid, not only without enthusiasm, but with positive aversion, as a grave danger to the colonial and commercial power of Spain. In France, public opinion had greatly cooled towards America. The war had lasted longer than had been anticipated, and the most clear-sighted of the ministers saw plainly that it was sweeping France rapidly to inevitable bankruptcy. Maurepas openly expressed his anxiety for peace. Necker, who had at all times opposed the war, wrote a secret letter to Lord North on December 1, 1780, proposing a negotiation, and an immediate truce, leaving the belligerent Powers in America in possession of the territory they actually held. Vergennes entirely disavowed this step, but he also was sincerely anxious for peace, if it could be honourably obtained. As we have seen, he was greatly disenchanted with the Americans. He complained bitterly that the whole financial burden of supporting them was thrown upon France, and that the law reducing the value of American paper money was a gross fraud upon French creditors; he had no sympathy with American aspirations for the conquest of Canada, and he was much alarmed at the growing power of Russia, and anxious that England should not be so reduced, or so alienated, as to be unable or unwilling to co-operate with France in her Eastern policy.

In February 1780, John Adams arrived in Paris with instructions to negotiate a treaty of commerce with Great Britain in the event of a peace, but his

relations with Vergennes were very stormy. Adams was an able and an honest man, and as he had been commissioner at Paris on the recall of Silas Deane, he was not quite unaccustomed to European ways, but he appears to have been singularly wanting in the peculiar tact and delicacy required in a diplomatist. The terms in which he complained of the insufficiency of the French expeditions to America, the anxiety which he showed, at a time when America was depending almost wholly upon French assistance, to represent his country as completely the equal of France, and to disclaim all idea of obligation, and the sturdy, but somewhat pedantic, republicanism with which he thought it necessary to assure the minister of one of the most despotic sovereigns in Europe that 'the principle that the people have a right to a form of government according to their own judgments and inclinations is in this intelligent age so well agreed on in the world, that it would be thought dishonourable by mankind in general' to violate it,[1] made the worst possible impression. Vergennes positively refused to hold any further communications with any American envoy except Franklin, while Franklin himself was only able to smooth the troubled waters by disavowing the sentiments of his colleague. Vergennes was perfectly determined not to make any peace apart from America, and he was extremely anxious not to sever the interests of America from those of France, but he feared greatly that if Adams were suffered to offer a commercial treaty, a separate peace might be made between America and England, and that the latter Power might then turn her undivided strength against her European enemies. On the other hand, he clearly recognised that a speedy peace had become a capital interest to France. He was fully resolved not to continue the war for the purpose

[1] American *Diplomatic Correspondence*, v. 299.

of extending American republicanism to Canada, and, provided the independence of America were actually established, he had no wish to oblige England to make any recognition which might appear to her a humiliation. The independence of Switzerland and Genoa, he said, had never been formally recognised by their former masters, and Spain had delayed her acknowledgment of the independence of Holland till long after it had been established indisputably as a fact. These precedents he thought might be followed in America, and he favoured the idea of terminating the war in that quarter by a truce for twenty years, or for a longer term, at the end of which time it was tolerably certain that the war would not be resumed. In order to carry out this scheme it would be necessary for the English to surrender New York, but Vergennes was prepared to leave them Georgia and South Carolina. Such proposals, however, found no favour in America, while in England they were encountered by the absolute resistance of the King.[1]

Nothing, indeed, could be more emphatic than the language of George III. during these negotiations, and his confidential correspondence with Lord North shows clearly how, to the very last scene of the very last act of the tragedy, he insisted in opposing every concession, even some of those which the American Commissioners had considered themselves authorised to offer in 1778. He was determined never to recognise the independence of America, never to admit a compromise under which that independence could become a real, though an unrecognised fact, never to enter into negotiation with France and Spain about the affairs of his revolted colo-

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[1] Bancroft, x. 441–445. Circourt, iii. 303–334. American *Diplomatic Correspondence*, iv. v. Trescot's *Diplomacy of the Revolution*.

nies. He was supported by his unwavering conviction that the independence of America would be the death-warrant of English greatness, and by a persuasion, which he would not abandon even in the very last moments of the contest, that England, by steady perseverance, had it yet in her power to bring the colonies to subjection. 'I can never suppose,' he wrote in the March of 1780, 'this country so far lost to all ideas of self-importance as to be willing to grant America independence.'[1] 'Every invitation to reconciliation,' he wrote two months later, 'only strengthens the demagogues in America in their arts to convince the deluded people that a little farther resistance must make the mother country yield; whilst at this hour every account of the distresses of that country shows that they must sue for peace this summer if no great disaster befalls us.'[2] 'Whilst America is only to be treated with through the medium of France,' he wrote in September, 'or the strange unauthorised propositions of the Commissioners are to be the basis of any arrangement with the rebellious colonies, I cannot give my sanction to any negotiation.'[3] 'The giving up the game would be total ruin; a small state may certainly subsist, but a great one mouldering cannot get into an inferior station, but must be annihilated. . . . The French never could stand the cold of Germany; that of America must be more fatal to them. America is distressed to the greatest degree. The finances of France as well as of Spain are in no good condition.'[4] 'Whilst the House of Bourbon,' he added in October, 'make American independency an article of their propositions, no event can ever make me be a sharer in such a negotiation.'[5]

The letter of Necker in December only encouraged

[1] *Correspondence of George III. with Lord North*, ii. 310.
[2] Ibid. p. 319.
[3] Ibid. p. 332.
[4] Ibid. p. 336.
[5] Ibid. p. 338.

the King in these sentiments, for he inferred from it that France was in even greater difficulties than he had imagined, and his only answer to the proposition was, that France might easily obtain peace by desisting from encouraging rebellion and aiming at American independence, 'whether under its apparent name, or a truce, which is the same in reality.'[1] But for the assistance of France, he urged, the contest must still end in the return of the colonies to the mother country;[2] and as late as the beginning of November 1781, three weeks before the account arrived of the surrender of Lord Cornwallis, the language of the King was as determined as ever. 'I feel the justness of our cause. I put the greatest confidence in the valour of both navy and army, and above all, in the assistance of Divine Providence. . . . I trust the nation is equally determined with myself to meet the conclusion with firmness. If this country will persist, I think an honourable termination cannot fail.'[3]

But if the King was unchanged, the nation at last was beginning to recognise the facts of the situation. The combination of France and Spain against England, and the humiliating spectacle of a foreign fleet commanding the English Channel, had for the first time caused the country gentry to waver, and had convinced many of them of the necessity of abandoning America. The Cabinet was well known to be divided. The Bedford party were peculiarly restless; negotiation after negotiation was made to strengthen the Government by a coalition, and the abandonment of the ministry by Lord Gower, in the autumn of 1779, gave a considerable shock to Tory opinion. The language of the Opposition grew more confident, and for the first time they began

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[1] *Correspondence of George III. with Lord North*, ii. 345.
[2] Ibid. p. 380. [3] Ibid. p. 387.

to enjoy some real popularity.[1] The ground which they very judiciously selected for their attack was the enormous and corrupt expenditure of the Government. Before the Christmas recess of 1779 the subject had been brought forward in the Lords, both by Richmond and Shelburne, while Burke in the Commons had identified himself with it, and promised a comprehensive scheme of reform to be introduced after the recess. Parliament was reminded that the sea and land forces now amounted to little less than 300,000 men; that the national debt would, by the end of the ensuing year, have increased since the beginning of the war by 63 millions, and risen to 198 millions; that in spite of the unprecedented magnitude of the Civil List it had been largely exceeded; and that the tap-root of a great portion of this expenditure was a desire to obtain by corrupt means a parliamentary ascendency. Queen Anne had a Civil List 300,000*l.* less than that of George III., yet during the great French war she had allotted 100,000*l.* of it to the support of the war. Now, however, though the country seemed on the verge of economical ruin, the tendency to useless expenditure was even on the increase, and its manifest object was the corruption of Parliament. The enormous multiplication of Court places, of sinecures, of pensions bestowed on members of Parliament, the absurd augmentation of

[1] As late, however, as September 16, 1779, Camden wrote to the Duke of Grafton: 'For my own part I confess fairly my own opinion that the opposition to the Court is contracted to a handful of men within the walls of Parliament, and that the people without doors are either indifferent or hostile to any opposition at all. Whether this singular and unexampled state of the country is owing to a consciousness among the people that they are as much to blame as the ministers . . . or whether in truth they hold the opposition so cheap as to think the kingdom would suffer instead of mending by the exchange, or from a combination of all these motives . . . the fact is they do not desire a change.'—Duke of Grafton's *Autobiography*.

the salaries of minor offices, the contracts which had been issued on terms exceedingly unfavourable to the public, and had then been distributed among members of Parliament—all these things were symptoms of a deliberate intention to falsify the voice of the nation, to govern the country, under the forms of law, through the influence of the Crown, to create in Parliament a body of men who could be counted upon to support any administration and any measure the King might approve.

If the question depended solely on the wishes of members of Parliament it would soon have been stilled, but the country was now becoming fully aroused. Never, perhaps, since the convulsions of the Commonwealth had political agitation spread so widely through England as in the recess of Parliament of 1779 and and 1780. In nearly every county great meetings were held for the purpose of drawing up petitions. Much was said about the necessity of obtaining a thorough reform of Parliament, and much about the necessity of arresting the war in America, but the main subject of complaint was the corrupt influence in Parliament. The agitation, unlike that of the Middlesex election, was conducted chiefly by the most weighty and most respectable classes of the community. The leading country gentry, and even great numbers of the clergy, took part in it, and in most counties it was supported by the great preponderance of property. The counties of York and Middlesex, which were two of the most important, and at the same time most representative constituencies in England, led the way by earnest petitions calling for a reduction of expenditure and especially of sinecures and pensions; and no less than twenty-four counties and several considerable cities passed petitions and resolutions on the corrupt influence of the Crown. A few counter-meetings were held, and

strenuous efforts were made by the partisans of the Government to obtain signatures to protests, but on the whole the preponderance both of numbers, property, and influence was decidedly with the Opposition. Committees and associations for agitating the question were in many places formed, and it became customary at these meetings to return public thanks to those politicians who had attempted to prevent or arrest the American War.[1]

The session which ensued showed that the feeling of the country had made a great impression on the members. The disciplined majority which had hitherto steadily supported Lord North was broken; the country gentry could no longer be counted on, and it was noticed that in some of the most important debates the whole stress of defending the Government was thrown upon North and upon the Crown lawyers. In April Dunning succeeded in giving the most serious blow which had yet been administered to the ministry of North, and to the system of Court policy, by carrying by a majority of eighteen his famous resolution 'that the influence of the Crown has increased, is increasing, and ought to be diminished.' Two other resolutions asserting the competency of the House 'to examine into and correct abuses in the expenditure of the Civil List revenues,' and 'the duty of the House to provide immediate and effectual redress of the abuses complained of in the petitions' of the counties, passed without divisions, and many measures were proposed for the purpose of carrying these resolutions into effect. The vast and complex scheme of economical reform introduced by Burke in a speech which astonished and delighted all sides of the House, from its eloquence, its knowledge, and its wisdom, was calculated to reduce the expenditure by

[1] *Annual Register*, 1780, pp. 85–88.

200,000*l.* a year, and to strike off no less than thirty-nine offices held by members of the House of Commons, as well as eleven held by members of the House of Lords. North did not venture to oppose it directly, and it passed both its first and second reading, but was ultimately stifled in Committee. The divisions, however, were very close and very fluctuating. Thus a motion of Sir G. Savile for requiring a list of all pensions was only defeated by a majority of two. The clause of Burke's Bill abolishing the third Secretary of State was only rejected by a majority of seven. The clause abolishing the Board of Trade was carried against the Government by a majority of eight. A Bill excluding contractors from the House of Commons passed the Commons, but was rejected in the Lords.

On several important questions, however, the Government had considerable majorities. Thus a Bill for disqualifying revenue officers from voting was thrown out by a majority of twenty-nine. An address moved by Dunning that Parliament should not be dissolved or prorogued till grievances had been redressed was rejected by a majority of fifty-one. An attempt of Conway to bring in a Bill for pacifying America was defeated by the previous question, which was carried by a majority of forty-two, and most of the clauses of Burke's economical reform measures were ultimately rejected by equally large majorities.

It was evident that the current was not yet flowing quite decisively in favour of the Opposition, and it was observed that the divisions in the latter part of the session were in general more favourable to the ministers than in the beginning. The Gordon riots in several ways assisted them. They discredited all popular agitation and political associations. They diverted the mind of the nation from the contest against the corrupt influence of the Crown; and some of the leaders of the

Opposition, and especially Burke, became obnoxious to the 'No Popery' feeling which was so strong. There were also dissensions in the Opposition, and it became clear that the question of parliamentary reform must profoundly divide them. The Duke of Richmond supported in the House of Lords a Bill in favour of manhood suffrage and annual parliaments. Fox, who on all occasions displayed extraordinary power and scarcely less extraordinary violence in denouncing the ministry, made a speech at a public meeting at Westminster in which he advocated annual parliaments and the addition of 100 county members. Burke, on the other hand, was strongly opposed to changes in the essential constitution or the duration of parliaments, and when, in May 1780, Sawbridge introduced the question of triennial parliaments, Fox and Burke took opposite sides. The motion of Sawbridge was rejected by 182 to 90.

At the end of September Parliament was somewhat suddenly dissolved. A corrupt system of making payments from the Secret Service money to members of Parliament had been for some time in existence,[1] and large sums were also provided from the Civil List or the Secret Service money for the expenses of Court candidates at the elections. The King afterwards complained that his expenses at the general election of 1780 were at least double his expenses at any other election since he had come to the throne, and although Lord North disputed the accuracy of this statement, it is certain that they were very great, and not altogether without result.[2] Fox, it is true, was returned with

[1] See *Correspondence of George III. with Lord North*, ii. 422.

[2] Ibid. pp. 421, 427. According to Lord North, the expenses of the elections secretly paid for by Government in 1779, 1780, and 1781 amounted, when all deductions were made, to about 53,000*l.* The preceding general election had cost them nearly 50,000*l.*, in addition to pensions of the annual value of 1,500*l.* paid for purchasing borough interest. In Bute's ministry the

Rodney for Westminster, but Burke lost his seat at Bristol, partly on account of his advocacy of Irish free trade, and partly on account of his defence of the Catholics in the recent debates. He was, however, at once returned by Lord Rockingham for the borough of Malton. Among those who lost their seats at this election was Gibbon, but he was soon after elected for the little borough of Lymington. Three men, who rose to great though unequal eminence, now for the first time appeared upon the political stage. William Wilberforce entered Parliament for Hull, Richard Brinsley Sheridan for Stafford, and William Pitt, after unsuccessfully canvassing Cambridge University, was brought in shortly after the general election by Sir James Lowther for the borough of Appleby. On the whole, the election appears to have slightly improved the position of the Government, and it was still further strengthened by the news which arrived in October of the great victory of Lord Cornwallis over Gates in South Carolina.

The power, and at the same time the determination, of the ministers was shown by their conduct when the new Parliament met, in removing from the Speakership Sir Fletcher Norton, who had lately become obnoxious to the Court, and in raising to that dignity Mr. Cornwall, who already held an office disposable at the pleasure of the Crown; and the popular Bills in the session of 1781 made no progress. Burke's Bill for the regulation of the Civil List establishment was ultimately defeated by 233 to 190, the Bill for excluding contractors from Parliament by 120 to 100, the Bill for disqualifying revenue officers from voting by 133 to 86, the motion of Sir George Savile for referring the county

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Secret Service fund had risen suddenly from 58,000*l.* to 82,168*l.*

See May's *Constitutional History*, i. 320–324.

petitions for the redress of grievances to a committee of the whole House by 212 to 135. The Opposition were equally unsuccessful in their attempts to procure a condemnation of the declaration of war against Holland, and of the conduct of Rodney at St. Eustatius; and a motion which was made by Fox for a committee to consider the American war was rejected by 172 to 99. Twelve millions were this year borrowed in a manner which excited the greatest and most justifiable indignation both in the Opposition and in the country. The loan was issued on such terms that the price at once rose from 9 to 11 per cent. above par, and the country was thus compelled to pay nearly a million more than was necessary. This, however, was but one part of the evil. Following the evil precedent set by the ministry of Bute in 1763, a great part of the loan was distributed among the creatures of the ministry, who were thus gratified by an enormous though veiled bribe.[1] In spite, however, of the exposure, the majority continued to support the ministry, and when Parliament was prorogued on July 18, 1781, the Administration did not appear to be seriously shaken.

The fatal blow came from America. The year 1781, which at last gave a decisive turn to the American War, began under circumstances very unfavourable to the American cause, for it opened with by far the most formidable mutiny that had yet appeared in the American army. No troops in that army had shown themselves more courageous, more patient, and more devoted than the Pennsylvanian line. Its privates and non-commissioned officers consisted chiefly of immigrants from the north of Ireland, and it is remarkable that they had done good service in suppressing the mutiny of Connecticut troops in the previous year. Their pay,

[1] See May's *Const. Hist.* i. 325, 326.

however, was a whole year in arrears. They were left nearly naked and exceedingly destitute of provisions, and an ambiguity in the terms of their enlistments gave rise to a fierce dispute with their officers. The soldiers had been enlisted for three years or for the war, and the former period having elapsed they contended that the choice now remained with them of staying or going; while their officers maintained that they were bound for the longer period. Some officers were killed or wounded in attempting to suppress the mutiny, and the non-commissioned officers and privates, numbering about 1,300 men, left the camp at Morristown with their firearms and with six field-pieces, and marched to Princetown, apparently with the intention of proceeding to Philadelphia. General Wayne, who commanded at Morristown, fearing lest they should plunder the inhabitants for subsistence, sent provisions after them. The mutineers kept together in a disciplined body, elected their own temporary officers, committed no depredations, and proclaimed their full loyalty to the American cause, and their readiness, if their grievances were redressed, to return to their old officers.

In the weak condition of the American forces such a body, if it had gone over to the English, might have turned the fortunes of the war, and Washington was for some time in extreme alarm lest the contagion should spread through the other regiments. Sir Henry Clinton, the English general, sent confidential messengers to the revolted troops, and endeavoured by large offers to win them to his side. He offered a complete amnesty and British protection, and he promised to pay all the arrears due to them from Congress, without exacting any military service, though he would gladly accept it if it were offered. But the Pennsylvanian line were as steadfast as ever in their hostility to England, and they not only rejected the offers that were

made to them, but actually arrested the English emissaries and sent them prisoners to the American camp, where they were tried and hanged as spies. Congress at once opened a negotiation with the revolted troops, and at length induced them to lay down their arms. A general amnesty, a certain proportion of the pay which was due to them, and, above all, the discharge of those who were prepared to swear that they had only been enlisted for three years, quelled the discontent, and when a purse of 100 guineas was offered to those who had delivered up the British emissaries they refused to accept it, alleging that they had only done their duty.

The mutiny was quelled with much less difficulty than had been feared, but a great part of the Pennsylvanian troops now disappeared from the American army, and a dangerous precedent was established of wrongs redressed by revolt. A few weeks after the Pennsylvanian outbreak, some of the New Jersey troops, alleging very similar grievances, broke into mutiny and committed several outrages. They were, however, much less numerous, and Washington, having ascertained that his troops could be counted on, acted with great decision. The mutineers were speedily surrounded, and compelled to surrender at discretion, and two of their leaders were executed.

The anxiety, however, caused by these mutinies was soon in a great measure forgotten, as the news arrived of a very brilliant success in the South. It had become more and more the policy of the English to carry the war into the Southern colonies, where a great proportion of the inhabitants were still loyal to the Crown. They had, as we have seen, completely reduced Georgia in 1779, and South Carolina in 1780, but they had hitherto altogether failed in their attempts upon North Carolina, and a simultaneous invasion of that province and of Virginia was their chief plan for the present year. In

December 1780 reinforcements under General Leslie, amounting to about 2,000 men, arrived at Charleston from New York, and Cornwallis, without waiting for them to join him, moved towards the frontier. The American forces in North Carolina were commanded by Greene, who had superseded Gates, and who, as I have already mentioned, was one of Washington's most favourite soldiers. They are said to have amounted to little more than 2,000 men, a great part of them militia and exceedingly undisciplined. Greene hung about the frontier between the two provinces, and when the invasion became imminent, he marched with the main body of his troops in the direction of Camden, but sent a detachment under Colonel Morgan to make a diversion in South Carolina in a country called the district of Ninety-six. Morgan started with only 540 continental soldiers, but he was soon after joined by 400 or 500 militia, and about 200 came to him in South Carolina itself.

It was necessary that this force should be annihilated or expelled before the projected invasion of North Carolina could take place, and Cornwallis accordingly despatched his light troops, amounting to 1,000 or 1,100 men, a large proportion of them being cavalry, accompanied by two field-guns, to accomplish this object. The force was under the command of Colonel Tarleton, and it seemed amply sufficient for the purpose. Morgan fled precipitately—so precipitately that on one occasion the half-cooked dinners of his troops fell into the hands of the English; but finding the English gaining on him, he at length resolved to meet them at a place called Cowpens, about three miles from the frontier of the province. The battle was fought on January 17, 1781. The English most imprudently attacked when they were fatigued by a five hours' march through a difficult and swampy country, and the Americans had, of course, the choice of ground, though it does

not appear to have given them any great advantage.[1] On the other hand, the English seem to have been numerically at least equal to their enemies. They were all regular troops encountering an army of which more than half was militia, and they were supported by two cannon. Yet in spite of all these advantages they suffered an utter and ignominious defeat. A more than commonly deadly volley from the American line, a desperate bayonet charge, a sudden panic, and a failure on the part of Tarleton to bring up the reserves at the proper moment, seem to have been the chief incidents of the affair. The two English cannon were taken. More than 600 men were either captured, wounded, or killed, and the English army was thus deprived of the greater part of its light troops at a time when, from the nature of the campaign, such troops were especially needed.

The disaster was completely unexpected by Cornwallis, but he did everything in his power to repair it. Burning a great part of his baggage in order that he might move more quickly, he pursued Morgan and Greene into North Carolina, in hopes of regaining the prisoners that had been taken. Twice the Americans were only saved by the sudden rising of rivers, and on one occasion they marched no less than forty miles in a single day. It is said that the bloody marks of their bare and torn feet might be traced along the frozen ground. They succeeded, however, in escaping into Virginia, and North Carolina being for a short time in the possession of the English, several hundreds of loyalists flocked to the British standard. Greene, however, with large reinforcements from Virginia, again entered the province, and although he could not expel

[1] See Stedman, ii. 321–325. This writer is especially valuable for the Carolina campaigns, as he was himself present. See, too, the accounts in Bancroft and in the *Cornwallis Correspondence*, i. 81–83.

the English, he gave a terrible blow to the loyalist movement. A party of between 200 and 300 loyalists encountered some of the American troops, and having mistaken them for English, they suffered themselves to be surrounded. They speedily demanded quarter, but none was given, and the whole body were cut to pieces.

A similarly savage spirit seems to have been generally displayed in this province whenever the loyalists fell into the hands of the Americans, and it added greatly to the ferocity of the struggle. Cornwallis, who was a very truthful man, speaks of 'the shocking tortures and inhuman murders which are every day committed by the enemy, not only on those who have taken part with us, but on many who refuse to join them.'[1] The predominant sentiment of the province appears to have been originally on the side of the Government, and it probably still was so; but the loyalist party had been broken, scattered, or discouraged by premature insurrections, ruthlessly suppressed. Many were forced by the most savage persecutions to take arms for the Americans; and the consciousness that in the very probable event of the English being unable to hold the province, no quarter could be expected by loyalists, greatly checked enlistments. On March 15, Cornwallis encountered and completely defeated Greene, near Guilford, although the Americans had a great advantage both in numbers and position, but the victory was purchased by heavy losses, and it led to no important result. The extreme difficulty of obtaining provisions, the impossibility of occupying a vast country with no point in it that could command the rest, the want of boats for navigating the innumerable rivers and creeks that intersected the province, and the prevailing terror which prevented the loyalists from taking arms, obliged Cornwallis to retire,

[1] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, i. 73.

and in April he passed into Virginia, leaving a small force under Lord Rawdon to protect English interests in South Carolina.

Much confused and desultory fighting went on in that province, and there was a savage civil war between the Whigs and Tories; but, on the whole, the result was unfavourable to the English, for at the end of the campaign they held nothing in the Carolinas except the country immediately round Charleston. At the same time, it is tolerably certain that in all the States south of Virginia the active sympathisers with the Revolution were but a small minority, though they had succeeded in imposing on the peaceful inhabitants what Cornwallis termed 'the most oppressive and cruel tyranny that ever was exercised over any country.' It is probably no exaggeration to say that the news of the capture of Washington and Greene and of the total subjugation of the rebellion would have been received with genuine pleasure by the bulk of the population of the Carolinas, of Georgia, and of Maryland.[1]

[1] In a letter to Reed from the camp near Camden, May 4, 1781, General Greene gives a very confidential account of the state of the Southern provinces. He says: 'The majority is greatly in favour of the enemy's interest now, as great numbers of the Whigs have left the country. . . . The enemy have got a much firmer hold in South Carolina and Georgia than is generally believed. . . . North Carolina did nothing at all until she saw that we would not let the enemy possess the State quietly. There are a good many Whigs in the State, but I verily believe the Tories are much the most numerous, and the Whigs are so fond of pleasure that they have but little relish for the rugged business of war. . . . The Whigs will do nothing unless the Tories are made to do equal duty, and this cannot be effected, as the Tories are the stronger party; so neither aid the army. . . . Maryland has given no assistance to this army; not a man has joined us from that State. . . . If our good ally the French cannot afford assistance to these Southern States, in my opinion there will be no opposition on this side Virginia, before fall.'—*Life of Joseph Reed*, ii. 351–353. On the atrocities perpetrated on the loyalists, see the *Cornwallis Correspondence*, i. 54, 70, 84.

Almost immediately after the despatch of Leslie from New York, another force of about 1,600 men was sent from the same quarter into Virginia under the command of Arnold, who was now a brigadier-general in the British army, and who was burning to distinguish himself against his former friends. The objects of the English were to destroy the American stores in Virginia, and at the same time to create a diversion in favour of the forces that were operating in the Carolinas. Some small armed vessels sailed up the Chesapeake to co-operate with the invaders, who entered Richmond on January 7, 1781, destroyed great quantities of tobacco and other stores, and spread their devastations over a wide area. They met with scarcely any opposition, for the bulk of the Virginia militia had been sent to the army of Greene, and although Steuben was in Virginia at the head of a few troops they were much too few for serious resistance. An earnest attempt, however, was made to cut off the communications of Arnold. A considerable French fleet lay at Newport in Rhode Island, but it was blockaded, or at least watched, by a stronger English fleet. On January 22, however, a furious storm greatly injured the British fleet, and although the French admiral did not venture to attack it, he succeeded in sending three ships of war from his own fleet to the Chesapeake, for the purpose of blocking up Arnold's little squadron, and cutting off the English communication by water.[1] The enterprise was so far successful that Arnold found it necessary to retire to Portsmouth, where he entrenched himself beyond the reach of the French ships, which made a few prizes and returned safely to Newport.

Washington viewed with much alarm the presence of this daring soldier in Virginia, and he determined,

[1] Washington's *Works*, vii. 403, 404.

with the assistance of the French, to make a serious effort to capture or annihilate his whole force. Lafayette was placed at the head of 1,200 men, drawn from the New England and New Jersey lines, and was directed to attempt the capture, while the French fleet, carrying some 1,100 French soldiers, succeeded in sailing from Newport to the Chesapeake, in order to co-operate with him. The enterprise appeared very promising; and success, in addition to its great military and political importance, would have been extremely gratifying to the vindictive feelings of the Americans. Jefferson, the Governor of Virginia, offered a reward of 5,000 guineas for the capture of Arnold. Washington instructed Lafayette to execute the traitor ignominiously if he was taken, and he greatly applauded Lafayette's refusal to accept a letter from him when Arnold for a short time was commanding the British.[1] But the fatality which had as yet invariably hung over the combined operations of the French and Americans still continued. The French were not sufficiently prompt in availing themselves of the moments when several of the English ships were disabled by the storm. The English fleet followed them to the Chesapeake, defeated them, compelled them to return to Newport, and, by establishing communications with Arnold, secured his position; and, under the protection of the British fleet, 2,000 English soldiers, commanded by General Phillips, arrived in the Chesapeake on March 26, 1781, to make Virginia the chief theatre of the war.

It is somewhat remarkable how very little at this time was done by Washington himself. His eminent wisdom in counsel and administration was never more apparent than in the latter period of the war; but his great military reputation appears to me to rest almost

[1] Washington's *Works*, vii. 419; viii. 6, 7. *Mémoires de Lafayette.*

entirely on his earlier campaigns. He refused to take command of the forces in Virginia, being extremely anxious to effect another enterprise which would, as he believed, terminate the war. This enterprise was the capture of New York, which was left very weak by the large detachments that had been successively sent to the Southern States. For this, however, as for almost everything else, the Americans were absolutely dependent on the co-operation of the French, who do not appear to have looked with much favour on the proposal.[1] In February, 1781, Washington agreed with Count Rochambeau that it might be successfully carried out if the French could attain a naval superiority in America, and if the joint French and American army numbered 30,000 men, or double the force of the enemy in new York and its dependencies.[2] In April the English forces at New York had been lowered by successive detachments to about 7,000 regular troops.[3] In the middle of May a new detachment of from 1,500 to 2,000 men left New York for Virginia,[4] and at the end of that month Washington expressed himself ready to make the attempt, if the battalions from New Hampshire to New Jersey inclusive, which were 'still considerably deficient,' were completed, and if he could obtain the assistance of 4,000 French soldiers.[5]

The condition of the war, however, was at this time very singular, for while it was quite evident that it had come to its last stage, it was still curiously uncertain in what way it would terminate. The whole English army in America was so small, so scattered, so imperfectly supported by the inhabitants, and situated in districts where supplies were so difficult to obtain, that a great

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[1] Washington's *Works*, viii. 24.
[2] Ibid. viii. 25.
[3] Ibid. vii. 407.
[4] Ibid. p. 63.
[5] Ibid. p. 55.

part of it would be inevitably compelled to surrender if the Americans could obtain a very small reinforcement of regular French troops, and, above all, if the French could attain a naval supremacy sufficiently decisive to cut off communications. Already the French navy on the coasts equalled the English in numbers, and it was only by better seamanship that the victory off the Chesapeake had been won. With France, Spain, and Holland in arms against her, with India in a blaze of war, and with the northern Powers formed into a menacing, if not hostile league, it seemed scarcely possible that England should be able to reinforce either her army or her navy to such an extent as to turn the fortunes of the war, and although there were many loyalists in America, it had become quite evident that these could not be relied on to suppress the rebellion.

On the other hand, America was in the very last stage of exhaustion and decrepitude, and she depended for everything on her ally. The first condition of success was a naval supremacy, but this rested entirely with France. Nearly every ship of war the Americans possessed had by this time been captured or sunk.[1] On land it was abundantly proved that the English could neither be driven from South Carolina nor from Virginia, nor from New York, without the assistance of French soldiers, and the American army itself was only held together by the constant support and assistance of France. The Americans were compelled to appeal to her for gunpowder, for cannon, for small arms and most military munitions, for clothes, for pay,[2] and every delay in French supplies left them in a state of the most miserable destitution. General Greene described his army in the Carolinas in the midst of winter as 'lite-

[1] Hildreth, iii. 404.
[2] Washington's *Works*, vii. 407; viii. 44.

rally naked.'[1] Lafayette was only able to provide his troops in Virginia with shirts, and shoes, and hats, by pledging his private fortune, and in the course of the war he spent in the American cause not only his large annual income but also 700,000 francs of his capital.[2] 'There is not,' wrote the American General Clinton from Albany in April, '(independent of Fort Schuyler,) three days' provision in the whole department.'[3] Some of the troops had been unpaid for nearly sixteen months. Some of the most considerable battalions were dwindling by desertion into mere skeletons, and Washington complained that he could scarcely 'provide a garrison for Westpoint or feed the men that are there.'[4] 'From the post of Saratoga to that of Dobbs' Ferry,' he wrote in May, 'I believe there is not at this moment one day's supply of meat for the army on hand. . . . Unless a capital change takes place soon, it will be impossible for me to maintain our posts, and keep the army from dispersing.'[5] 'All the business of transportation, or a great part of it, being done by military impress, we are daily and hourly oppressing the people, souring their tempers, and alienating their affections. . . . Scarce any State in the Union has at this hour an eighth part of its quota in the field. . . . Instead of having the prospect of a glorious offensive campaign before us, we have a bewildered and gloomy defensive one, unless we should receive a powerful aid of ships, land troops, and money from our generous allies.'[6]

The bankruptcy of last year had almost completed

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[1] Washington's *Works*, vii. 355.

[2] *Mémoires de Lafayette*, i. 183, 297.

[3] Ramsay, ii. 222.

[4] Washington's *Works*, vii. 463 ; viii. 3, 22, 23.

[5] Ibid. viii. 36, 38, 39.

[6] Ibid. 31, 32. So in April 1781, Count Fersen wrote :—'Ce pays-ci n'est pas en état de soutenir une guerre plus longue. Il est ruiné, plus d'argent, plus d'hommes ; si la France ne les secourt vigoureusement, ils seront obligés de faire la paix.'—*Lettres du Comte de Fersen*, i. 52, 53.

the ruin, and Laurens was sent to France with the most urgent entreaties for a new loan. 'Be assured, my dear Laurens,' wrote Washington, 'day does not follow night more certainly than it brings with it some additional proof of the impracticability of carrying on the war without the aids you are directed to solicit. As an honest and candid man, as a man whose all depends on the final and happy termination of the present contest, I assert this, while I give it decisively as my opinion that without a foreign loan our present force, which is but the remnant of an army, cannot be kept together this campaign; much less will it be increased and in readiness for another. . . . If France delays a timely and powerful aid in the critical posture of our affairs, it will avail us nothing should she attempt it hereafter. . . . We cannot transport the provisions from the States in which they are assessed, to the army, because we cannot pay the teamsters, who will no longer work for certificates. . . . . Our troops are approaching fast to nakedness, and we have nothing to clothe them with; our hospitals are without medicines, and our sick without nutriment except such as well men eat. . . . In a word, we are at the end of our tether, and now or never our deliverance must come. . . . If it could be made to comport with the general plan of the war to keep a superior fleet always in these seas, and France would put us in a condition to be active by advancing us money, the ruin of the enemy's schemes would then be certain.'[1] 'Our present situation,' he wrote emphatically to Franklin, 'makes one of two things essential to us; a peace, or the most vigorous aid of our allies, particularly in the article of money.'[2]

If this language be true, it is evident that even at

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[1] Washington's *Works*, viii. 7, 8. See, too, vii. 370, 371.

[2] American *Diplomatic Correspondence*, iii. 188.

the last stage of the war it was possible that the independence of America might have collapsed. Nor were the counsels of France by any means unanimous. Even Vergennes was dismayed at the constant demands of America,[1] sceptical about her necessities, irritated at the tone which had recently been adopted by Adams, still more irritated by the manifest approval of that tone by the popular politicians in America. With the exception of Franklin and Washington, he appears to have had very little confidence in American public men; and he believed, not wholly without reason, that much of the distress which was described was due to the want of unity and patriotism of the Americans themselves, and especially to the fact that the Congress had no coercive powers over the several States. Lafayette, however, strongly supported the representations of Franklin, and the French minister at length resolved upon an act of generosity which was sufficient to enable the Americans to continue the war. Besides a loan of four millions of livres to take up bills already drawn upon Franklin, the French King granted six millions of livres as a free gift, and also agreed to guarantee in Holland an American loan to the amount of ten millions more.

This timely assistance was of vital importance. Vergennes, indeed, declared that it must be the last, and he complained bitterly that Laurens rather exacted than demanded help; that he was so displeased at not obtaining all he wanted that he treated the French ministers in a manner bordering upon insolence, and that they had wholly failed in awakening in him any sentiment of gratitude.[2]

We must now return to the fortunes of the war in

[1] See Washington's *Works*, vii. 175, 176, 379, 380. American *Diplomatic Correspondence*, ix. 199 *seq.*

[2] See the letters of Vergennes in Washington's *Works*, viii. 525, 528.

Virginia. When General Phillips arrived in that province towards the close of March 1781 with 2,000 men from New York, he assumed the command of all British forces in Virginia by virtue of his seniority to Arnold. Lafayette was hastily recalled to the province from Maryland, and he was joined by some Virginian militia under Steuben, but their joint force was entirely unable to oppose, or even very seriously to molest, the English, who made it their policy to destroy all stores, and break up all centres of resistance over a large area. Virginia had furnished the chief materials for resistance to the English in the Carolinas. It was one of the provinces where the popular sentiment was most hostile to them, and it was so important from its size, wealth, and geographical position that its complete reduction might almost terminate the struggle, or at least make British influence supreme in the Southern colonies. It was plain that, if the contest ended in favour of the English, it would be by the complete exhaustion of the Americans, and by carrying a war of devastation into Virginia this end was most likely to be attained. The easy navigation of the river James and its dependencies greatly facilitated the efforts of the British, and they also seized all the best horses of the province, and sent parties to scour the country in many directions. Thousands of hogsheads of tobacco—a great part of them destined for France; many ships; long lines of docks and warehouses; barracks, and many other public buildings; vast accumulations of food and of naval and military stores, were captured or burnt without difficulty and almost without resistance. Clinton expressed his belief that with a proper reinforcement and a naval superiority during the next campaign a mortal stab could speedily be given to the rebellion, and General Phillips agreed with him, that the year 1781 would probably witness its complete

subjugation.[1] On May 13 Phillips died of a malignant fever, and he was succeeded in command by Arnold; but Arnold only held the position for a few days. Cornwallis, abandoning his enterprise in the Carolinas, marched in less than a month from Wilmington in North Carolina to Petersburg in Virginia, and arrived at the latter place on May 20. He at once took the command, and Arnold was soon after recalled to New York.

Virginia had now become the chief centre of English operations in America, for Cornwallis found himself at the head of not less than 7,000 troops. He continued for some time to pursue the policy of his predecessors, and by dividing his forces he carried ruin over a great part of the province. There was as yet no serious resistance. All the more important towns of Virginia—Petersburg, Richmond, Charlottesville, Portsmouth, Williamsburg—were entered by the English. The Virginian Assembly was put to flight, and some of its members were taken. Some English soldiers—the remains of the army detained in violation of the Convention of Saratoga—were hastily carried over the mountains to Winchester,[2] and it was computed that in a short time the damage done by the English might be valued at not less than ten millions of dollars.[3]

Lafayette, who commanded the American forces in the province, appears to have shown skill and prudence in baffling the attempts of Cornwallis to bring on a general action; but his forces were far too weak to enable him seriously to obstruct the English. Gradually, however, they increased by new levies of Virginian militia, and especially by the arrival in June of about

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[1] Clinton's *Narrative*, pp. 6, 7.
[2] Hildreth, iii. 356.
[3] Ibid. 358.

1,000 men from Pennsylvania under General Wayne. The American force then consisted of 2,000 regular troops, and 3,200 militia. On July 6 Lafayette attacked the English army as it was crossing the James river, but after a severe engagement he was beaten off with heavy loss.[1] The American forces, however, had now become so powerful that it was no longer possible for the English to detach marauding parties, and Cornwallis resolved to concentrate his army at some strong point by the water-side where it might be in communication with the English fleet, and from whence it might, if necessary, be sent either to New York or to the South. This step appeared the more essential as it was known that a French fleet under De Grasse was on its way to America, and it was believed that a combined French and American attack upon New York was impending. An intercepted letter of Washington showed that such a design was in contemplation,[2] and Sir Henry Clinton, who commanded at New York, called upon Cornwallis to send some of his forces for its defence; but this order was afterwards countermanded. Between 2,000 and 3,000 German troops had arrived at New York and strengthened the garrison. There was at this time some dissension between Cornwallis and Clinton, and some ambiguity and vacillation about the orders which Clinton sent to Cornwallis, which afterwards gave rise to controversy; but their final purport was that Cornwallis was to fortify some post on the neck of land near the mouth of the Chesapeake, so as to be able to afford protection to the English fleet which was destined to cooperate with him, and Yorktown was indicated as peculiarly fitted for that purpose. Yorktown and Gloucester, two opposite peninsulas running out into the river, were accordingly selected. They were occupied on

[1] *Mémoires de Lafayette*, i. 506. [2] Washington's *Works*, viii. 60.

August 1, 1781, and by the 22nd the whole British army in Virginia, consisting of rather more than 7,000 men, was concentrated there.

The position of the British was not a very strong one, and it was only possible to fortify it hastily; but, as it lay between the York and James rivers, it commanded a large sheet of water, and could afford sufficient protection to British ships. It was a position which could be securely held against any force which was at this time in Virginia, and it was not likely to be seriously endangered as long as the English had an ascendency on the sea. On the other hand, if this condition failed; if an enemy commanded the waters and could beleaguer the narrow peninsulas, the situation was absolutely hopeless, for all possibility of retreat could be easily cut off.

We must now turn to two or three operations which took place in other quarters. On July 6 Washington was joined at White Plains by the small French army under Count de Rochambeau, who had long been confined in Rhode Island, and about a fortnight later the combined armies marched in the direction of Long Island. Although an attack was at first contemplated, it was found to be impracticable, and the Americans confined themselves to reconnoitring the position of the English.[1] The expedition had the effect of strengthening Clinton in his persuasion that a serious attack on New York was contemplated. But in truth, the American plan was changed, and it was resolved to mass all available forces in Virginia, and, with the assistance of the approaching French fleet and army, to crush the army of Cornwallis. Washington and Rochambeau succeeded without attracting notice in withdrawing the bulk of their army from the camp. They marched to

[1] Stedman, ii. 397.

Philadelphia, where they arrived on August 30, and proceeded at once to Virginia.

On the very day on which Washington entered Philadelphia the long-expected fleet of De Grasse arrived in the Chesapeake. Contrary to all expectation, it contained not less than twenty-eight ships of the line, and when combined with the French squadron already in Rhode Island, it gave France an indisputable and overwhelming ascendency in the American waters. Sir Samuel Hood had indeed been despatched by Rodney to reinforce the English navy in America, and he arrived at Sandy Hook on August 28; but Rodney had greatly underrated the probable strength of the French fleet, and the squadron of Hood only contained fourteen ships of the line. Arriving with this overwhelming force, De Grasse at once proceeded to block up York River, to move the bulk of his fleet into a secure and protected bay, and to land 3,200 French soldiers whom he had brought from the West Indies, and who made the army of Lafayette superior to that of Cornwallis. Admiral Graves, who now commanded the whole British navy in America, attempted to relieve Cornwallis, and on September 5 he fought an indecisive battle, before the French squadron from Rhode Island had arrived; but, though some ships on both sides were severely damaged, he was unable to draw De Grasse from his protected situation, and he at length returned to New York.

The Rhode Island squadron arrived in the Chesapeake and made the naval ascendency of the French overwhelming, and at the same time it brought great quantities of heavy ordnance and other materials for the siege. The net was closing tightly around the unhappy English general, and a new army under Washington and Rochambeau was on the march.

It was impossible for Clinton to relieve Cornwallis, but he attempted by a diversion to recall a part of the

army which had gone to Virginia. Benedict Arnold was sent in the beginning of September to attack the town of New London, in Connecticut, which was a great centre of privateering and of military stores, and was defended by Fort Trumbull and Fort Griswold, the latter a place of considerable strength. It was captured after some hard fighting, and in Fort Griswold the exasperated soldiers are said for some time to have given no quarter, and to have killed or wounded more than 100 Americans after they had declared themselves ready to surrender. Arnold was at this time at the opposite side of the river, and the English officer commanding the assailing body either could not or would not restrain his soldiers till all but about seventy of the garrison had been killed or wounded. Ten or twelve of the enemies' ships and great quantities of naval stores were burnt; the fire, contrary to the intention of Arnold, communicated itself to the civil buildings, and the whole town was destroyed. This was the last achievement of Arnold in America, and very soon after he sailed for England.[1]

The destruction of New London had, however, no effect upon the fortunes of the war. Washington steadily pursued his march, and the principal obstacles he encountered were financial ones. A great part of his troops, he complained, had been long unpaid. The march southwards was unpopular with the Northern soldiers; but 'a douceur of a little hard money would put them in a proper temper.'[2] If the Americans had been left unaided, they might have been unable to maintain themselves, but French assistance supported them at every step. Count Rochambeau advanced on

[1] Stedman, Bancroft. See, too, the despatches of General Heath in Arnold's *Life of Arnold*.

[2] Washington, viii. 149, 150.

his own authority 20,000 dollars, and on August 25 Laurens arrived from Europe bringing with him a great part of the King of France's gift to the States. A great number of transports were collected, and on September 14 the combined army of Washington and Rochambeau arrived at Williamsburg, in Virginia, and a few days later they joined Lafayette in the investiture of Yorktown. The position of Cornwallis was now absolutely hopeless. Shut in within a narrow promontory, his army of about 7,000 men was besieged by an army of more than 16,000, 7,000 of whom were regular French soldiers, while a fleet far more powerful than any other in American waters commanded every approach by sea. On September 25 Washington wrote to De Grasse that the success of the combined French and American attack was 'as certain as any military operations can be rendered by a decisive superiority of strength and means.'[1] Before long the feeble fortifications of Yorktown became completely untenable, and on October 19, 1781, Cornwallis was obliged to surrender, with his whole army. The soldiers became the prisoners of the Americans, the seamen, of the French.

This calamity virtually terminated the American war. For the second time a whole British army was compelled to surrender. The power of England in Virginia was destroyed; her power in the more Southern States could not now be long maintained. New York alone contained a considerable British force, and in the sixth year of the war, and with so great a confederation in opposition to England, it seemed impossible that the disaster could ever be retrieved. Whether, if Rodney had been less occupied with the sale of the goods of St. Eustatius, he might not have

[1] Washington's *Works*, viii. 164.

prevented the naval ascendency in America passing out of English hands; whether Cornwallis might not, before the arrival of Washington and his army, have extricated himself from his position, and cut his way into North Carolina; whether Clinton, at New York, did everything possible to relieve him, are points which have been fiercely contested by military critics. It was noticed, however, that while in nearly all the battles in the North in which Howe commanded, the English had a great advantage in numbers, in nearly all the battles in the South the English under Cornwallis and Rawdon were greatly outnumbered.[1] Cornwallis almost alone among the British commanders in America showed himself a really efficient and energetic general, and in the last scene his position was beyond recovery. On the day previous to the surrender the rank and file of the garrison in Yorktown and Gloucester were only 5,950 men, and so many were sick and wounded that not more than 4,017 were reported fit for duty.[2]

When the English fleet returned to New York, Clinton resolved to make a desperate attempt to relieve Cornwallis, and the arrival of a few additional ships from England and the West Indies made the attempt not absolutely hopeless. He embarked with 7,000 men, but some time elapsed before the fleet could be fitted out, and it was only on October 19 that it got clear of the bay. It arrived off Cape Virginia on the 24th, learnt there the news of the capitulation, and soon returned unmolested to New York. In the capitulation, Cornwallis had endeavoured without success to obtain from Washington an article exempting the loyalists in Yorktown from punishment, but he was allowed to send to New York a ship of war containing as many soldiers as he should think fit, on condition that they should be accounted

[1] Stedman, ii. 415. [2] Ibid. 414.

for in any future exchange, and he was thus enabled to save his American followers from the vengeance of their countrymen.

It was on November 25, 1781, only two days before the meeting of Parliament, that the fatal news of the surrender of Yorktown arrived in England. Lord North, who had long looked with utter despondency on the war, saw at once that his worst fears were realised; and when he heard the intelligence from Lord George Germaine, his accustomed calm forsook him, and he paced the room in an agony of distress, exclaiming—'Oh God, it is all over!' The King, however, never for a moment flinched. He saw, indeed, that an attempt to carry on a continental war in America must be relinquished; but he was perfectly resolved that New York and Charleston, or at least the former, should be retained, and that American independence should even now be withheld. 'The getting a peace at the expense of a separation from America,' he wrote, 'is a step to which no difficulties shall ever get me to be, in the smallest degree, an instrument.'[1] The speech at the opening of Parliament, though announcing the catastrophe, contained no intimation of surrender; but the conviction of the utter hopelessness of continuing the war in America had sunk deeply into the minds of the more independent members, and the great majority which had so long ruled England crumbled speedily away. Burke and Fox, in several speeches of extraordinary eloquence and extraordinary virulence, assailed the whole conduct of the war, and they were powerfully supported by William Pitt, the son of the great Lord Chatham, who was already rapidly rising to a foremost place. The adjournment at this very critical time for the Christmas

[1] *Correspondence of George III. with Lord North*, ii. 398.

holidays, on December 21, was much objected to; but before that date it had become evident that the Cabinet was profoundly divided, that the resolution of North was wholly shattered, and that about twenty of the country gentry had already passed from the Government to the Opposition.

Nothing but a brilliant military triumph could have saved the Ministry, but not one gleam of success relieved the dreary monotony of disaster which clouded its closing days. Admiral Kempenfeldt, who had been sent to intercept the French fleet from Brest, found that the information of the Admiralty about the number of the enemy was wholly erroneous, and he was obliged to avoid a hopeless contest by retreat. St. Eustatius was taken at the close of 1781 by the Marquis de Bouillé with some troops taken from the Irish brigade. In January 1782 the Dutch settlements of Demerara and Essequibo, which the English had taken, were recaptured by the French. In February the long siege of Minorca terminated, and that important island passed once more under Spanish rule. In the same month, after several vicissitudes of fortune, and in spite of the great gallantry of its defenders, and of a small English fleet under Sir Samuel Hood, the rich island of St. Christopher was taken by the French. De Bouillé had in the previous month landed 8,000 men upon it, and he was supported by the great French fleet under De Grasse. The islands of Nevis and Montserrat at once shared the fate of St. Christopher; and of all the great English possessions in the West Indies, nothing now remained except Jamaica, Barbadoes, and Antigua. Eight islands, it was said, as well as thirteen colonies, had been lost by the Ministry of North.

Great public meetings in London and Westminster now strengthened the Opposition, General Carleton was appointed Commander-in-Chief in America in the

room of Clinton, and Lord George Germaine, the Secretary of War, who was at enmity with Carleton, resigned his office and was replaced by Welbore Ellis. At the special desire of the King, Germaine was raised to the peerage as Viscount Sackville, and his promotion more than counterbalanced the popularity of his removal. Several peers, recalling the sentence of the court-martial which sat upon him twenty-three years before, after the battle of Minden, inveighed against his peerage as an insult to the House of Lords. In the Commons censures of the Government in many forms and on many topics were eagerly pressed on, and parliamentary language had seldom been so virulent. It was soon evident that the victory belonged to the Opposition. Resolutions censuring the whole administration of the navy were repelled by majorities of 22 and of 19; but an address, moved by Conway, petitioning the King to stop the American war, was only rejected by a single vote, and the Government were obliged to accept a resolution asserting the hopelessness of reducing America. At last, on March 20, North anticipated a motion for his dismissal, by announcing his resignation; and in a speech of much dignity and pathos, returned thanks to the House which had supported him so long.

'At last,' wrote the King, 'the fatal day has come.' His feelings were clearly shown in a letter in which, as late as March 19, he declared that his 'sentiment of honour' would not permit him 'to send for any of the leaders of Opposition and personally treat with them,'[1] and for a short time he is said to have gravely contemplated abdicating the throne and returning to Hanover. Attempts were made to induce Shelburne, and afterwards Gower, to construct a Government, but they speedily failed. It was useless to dissolve Parliament,

[1] *Correspondence of George III. with Lord North*, ii. 415, 146.

for the country was far more hostile to the fallen ministry than the legislature, and it had become evident that it was now only possible to govern by one party and by one policy. The King reluctantly bowed his head to the yoke. He showed indeed his personal animosity by refusing to negotiate with Rockingham except through the intervention of Shelburne, but he accepted Rockingham as his minister; the Whig party once more rose to power, and their avowed task was to terminate the war by recognising the Independence of America.

CHAPTER XV.

It was wittily said by Lord North that the late Opposition had often accused him of issuing lying 'Gazettes,' but that he had certainly never issued any 'Gazette' which was half so false as that in which his successors announced their installation in office; for it consisted of a long succession of paragraphs, each of them announcing a new Whig appointment, and each of them beginning with the words, 'His Majesty has been *pleased* to appoint.' The letters of the King show, indeed, the feeling of despair and humiliation with which he accepted the new ministry, and how completely he regarded it as a triumph over himself. The independence of America he believed to be the ruin of England, and his new ministers were pledged to acknowledge it, and some of them, in the opinion of the King, were largely responsible for the insurrection that had effected it. The emancipation of the royal power from ministerial thraldom, the restoration of the system of divided administrations, and the maintenance in Parliament of a King's Party sufficiently powerful to control the march of affairs, had been the objects at which the King for twenty years had been steadily aiming. It was the avowed object of the Whig party to defeat them, and they were pledged to an extensive measure of economical reform, especially intended to restrict the Court influence in Parliament. Personally as well as politically several of the new ministers were most obnoxious to the King. For Rockingham he had mingled

feelings of contempt and dislike. The Duke of Richmond had, he considered, insulted him by abstaining almost wholly for several years from his Court.[1] Fox he regarded with utter abhorrence as a man without either private morals or public principles, and he seems to have very imperfectly recognised his great powers. There was, however, now no escape, unless the King chose to carry out his threat of retiring to Hanover. The Tory party was for the present hopelessly shattered and discredited by the victory of America; the country gentry had abandoned it, and with it fell the whole system of government which had been so laboriously built up.

In some negotiations with Rockingham which the King had allowed Thurlow to make a few days before the resignation of North, it had been suggested that Rockingham should accept the task of forming an administration, and settle the terms afterwards. Rockingham, however, had positively refused, and stated that he would only come into office on condition that he was authorised by the King to make peace with America on the basis of her independence; to introduce measures disqualifying contractors from sitting in Parliament, and revenue officers from voting at elections, and to carry out a plan of rigid economy. When North had actually resigned, the King obstinately adhered to his determination of holding no personal intercourse with the leader of the Whigs till the ministry was actually formed, and he authorised Shelburne to communicate as his agent with Rockingham. The first impulse of Rockingham was to decline office on the ground that, if the King intended to place him at the head of his treasury, he must at least show him the very ordinary measure of confidence of admitting him

[1] *Correspondence of George III. with Lord North*, ii. 327.

at once into his closet. Fox, however, and Richmond, who were probably anxious to efface the impression of their former violence, urged Rockingham to waive the point and accept the office of Prime Minister under a prince who had so manifestly shown his preference for another member of the intended Government. He consented also that Thurlow should remain Chancellor; and the great abilities and influence in the House of Lords of that remarkable man were henceforth entirely at the command of the King. For the rest the Government was a Whig Government; but, like every other Government of that kind, it was necessarily formed out of a fusion of two very dissimilar bodies.

By far the larger was that which followed Rockingham, and which received its chief inspiration from Burke. The smaller body consisted of the old followers of Chatham, who had quarrelled with the main organisation of the Whigs, who always leaned to a divided and eclectic Government, but who in some respects were more decided advocates of popular measures than the followers of Rockingham. Of this body Shelburne was now the chief. About half the ministry consisted of followers of Rockingham and the other half either of followers of Shelburne or of statesmen who had at least isolated themselves from the Whig connection. The system of having three secretaries of state was now abolished, and it was replaced by the system of two secretaries of state, one for the Foreign and the other for the Home and Colonial Departments. The first of these offices was given to Fox and the second to Shelburne. Rockingham was First Lord of the Treasury. Lord John Cavendish, who was one of the most popular and respected of his followers, was made Chancellor of the Exchequer; Keppel was First Lord of the Admiralty; Camden, President of the Council; Grafton, Lord Privy Seal; Richmond, Master of the Ordnance; and Conway, Commander-in-Chief.

Burke, though he was in truth the greatest man in the ministry, though his intellect was in some respect peculiarly adapted for weighing principles and arguments, and though he was especially entrusted with the great measure of economical reform which was one of the chief promises of the new ministry, was only made Paymaster of the Forces, without a seat in the Cabinet. He did not belong to the charmed circle of hereditary legislators, and his too frequent exhibitions of violence and intemperance in debate, as well as the number of poor relations who hung about him, had somewhat wrecked his influence.

The prospects of the ministry were not favourable, and its best hope lay in the extreme depression of its opponents. The King was sure to be bitterly and persistently hostile, and the Crown influence, though for a time weakened, was still enormously great in both Houses of Parliament, and it was likely to be skilfully used. The King was now a very different man from what he had been during the ministry of Bute. Thoroughly acquainted with the details of public business, and with the characters and weaknesses of public men, with great courage, great power of dissimulation, and indomitable perseverance, he had much skill in bending the wills of others to his own, and in dividing and undermining where he could not directly overthrow. Shelburne is reported to have said of him that 'he possessed one art beyond any man he had ever known; for that by the familiarity of his intercourse he obtained your confidence, procured from you your opinion of different public characters, and then availed himself of this knowledge to sow dissension.'[1] Rockingham, who, without any shining talents, possessed to an unusual degree the art of reconciling jarring elements, and con-

[1] Nicholls' *Recollections of George III.* i. 389.

ciliating diverging statesmen, was completely shattered in health. The nation was now prepared to acknowledge the independence of America, and the first task of the ministry was to negotiate a peace; but under existing circumstances a peace must necessarily be a humiliating one, and the prospect of signing it could hardly be agreeable to statesmen who remembered the fate of the ministries which negotiated the Peace of Utrecht and the Peace of Paris.

Nor was the prospect much more favourable when the American question was terminated. This question had for several years formed the main guiding and distinguishing division of English politics, and once it was removed it was extremely difficult to predict what new question would arise, or into what new combinations English parties would crystallise. The question of parliamentary reform could not be long delayed, and it was difficult to see how any harmony could be preserved between Richmond, who would have gone as far as universal suffrage, and Burke, and apparently Rockingham, who were hostile to any extension of the franchise, and to any organic change in the constitution of Parliament. The proposed measure of economical reform, though it was likely greatly to purify English politics, must necessarily wound the interests and excite the exasperation of great classes of politicians. The object of Burke and Rockingham was so to maintain the unity and homogeneity of the Cabinet that it might dictate its policy to the King, and to elaborate carefully the organisation of parties. Shelburne, on the other hand, belonged to the following of Chatham, who had made it a main object to disjoint and pulverise parties, and to govern with men chosen from the most various connections.

Shortly before the change of government, the King had invited Shelburne to form a ministry. Shelburne,

finding this to be impossible, declined the task, and recommended the King to send for Rockingham; but he does not appear to have at once disclosed this fact to his future colleagues. The marked way in which, in the subsequent negotiations, the King selected Shelburne as his representative, and conducted through his instrumentality the negotiations with his future Prime Minister, contributed very much to aggravate the jealousy and dislike with which a large section of the ministry regarded Shelburne. The King was accustomed to correspond with him much more intimately than with any other minister, and he showed a peculiar alacrity in granting any favours Shelburne demanded. Without giving any previous intimation of his intentions to Rockingham, Shelburne obtained for Dunning the Chancellorship of the Duchy of Lancaster for life, with a seat in the Cabinet, and an income of 4,000*l.* a year, and he was thus enabled to command in the Cabinet a number of votes equal to those of the followers of Rockingham. Barré became Treasurer of the Navy, and Shelburne, with the assent of Rockingham, secured for him a pension of 3,200*l.* a year from the time he quitted office. His claims on the party were no doubt very great, for he had been deprived of posts to the value of 1,500*l.* a year on account of his vote against general warrants in 1763, and he had afterwards been led by the hostility of those who were in power to retire from the army. At the same time this large pension obtained in a time of severe distress by a ministry which was proposing to restrain the Sovereign from granting a greater pension than 300*l.* a year, was exceedingly unpopular, and when it was disclosed after the death of Rockingham it excited much discussion in Parliament.[1] Fox, in one of his first interviews with

[1] See *Parl. Hist.* xxiii. 153, 155.

Shelburne, gave the keynote of the situation when he said that he saw that the Administration was to consist of two parts, one belonging to the King and the other to the public.

The position which Shelburne occupies in the political history of the reign of George III. is a very singular one, and it appears at first sight not easy to reconcile the judgments of his contemporaries with the facts of his life. He was confessedly among the four or five best debaters in the House of Lords, and his administrative career, if it was not marked by any extraordinary brilliancy, was at least in most respects very creditable. It is true indeed that his first appearance in public life as a satellite of Bute, his violent and undignified quarrel with the elder Fox, the accusation of falsehood which was then brought against him, and the furious invective which his close follower Barré had delivered against Pitt after that minister had resigned office, had thrown some considerable shade over his political reputation, but his subsequent policy appeared both popular and consistent. During the long illness of Chatham, Shelburne had been his chief representative in the Cabinet; and without being admitted to any very close intimacy, Chatham had given him an unusual amount of his confidence. In the case of Wilkes, in the case of the prosecuted printers, in nearly every phase of the American quarrel, in nearly every discussion about religious liberty, parliamentary reform, and economical reform, Shelburne showed himself steadily liberal; and Bentham, who knew him well, said of him that 'he was the only minister he had ever heard of who did not fear the people.' He was also one of the earliest, ablest, and most earnest of English freetraders, and no English statesman of his time showed himself so fully imbued with the commercial views of Adam Smith. He was one of the few politicians who

looked forward to a cordial French alliance, and when, after a long period of eclipse, he returned to active public life in the closing years of the century, he exerted all his powers to prevent the war with France. His private life was eminently respectable. He bore a long exclusion from office with great dignity and calm, and no part of his public career appears to have been influenced by any sordid desire of emolument, title, or place.

Yet, with all these claims to respect, Shelburne was one of the most unpopular statesmen of his time, and he never succeeded in throwing off the imputation of an incurable insincerity. Franklin, who was his warm friend, and who admired him greatly, gives him as a proof of the capital importance to a public man of a reputation for perfect straightforwardness. 'Lord Shelburne,' he says, 'has unfortunately the character of being insincere, and it has hurt much his usefulness; though in all my concerns with him I never saw any instance of that kind.' Few things are more curious than the number and intensity of the hostile judgments that were pronounced on him by men of the most opposite politics and characters, by men who scarcely agreed on any other point. Lord Holland, enraged at the quarrel about the paymastership, pronounced him to be 'an infamous liar.' The King, who used him so largely, and who at one period made him the chief instrument of his policy, described him as 'a worthless man who has broken faith with me,' and was accustomed to speak of him as 'the Jesuit of Berkeley Square.' Horace Walpole, without having, as far as can be traced, any personal quarrel with him, always spoke of him with unmeasured abhorrence. 'His falsehood,' he once wrote, 'was so constant and notorious, that it was rather his profession than his instrument. . . . He was so well known, that he could only deceive by speaking truth. . . . He not only had no principles, but was ready for

any crime that suited his plans. . . . A Catiline and a Borgia were his models in an age when half their wickedness would have suited his purposes better.' Burke, although he had once been on friendly terms with him, and although he had asked favours from him, had begun to distrust his character long before the quarrel of 1782,[1] and after that event his language about him expressed the most extravagant detestation. 'If Lord Shelburne is not a Catiline or a Borgia,' he said, in one of his speeches, 'it must not be ascribed to anything but his understanding.' The same personal dislike of Shelburne was shown by nearly all the leading members of the Rockingham party; by Fox, Sheridan, Lord John Cavendish, and Sir Gilbert Elliot; it was shared with little modification by Grafton and Camden, by North, Loughborough, and the Bedfords; and as late as 1792 Lord Holland mentions that the leading Whigs had, with very few exceptions, 'not only a distrust, but an unwarrantable hatred of his very name.'[2]

Political injuries and differences will, no doubt, partly account for these antipathies; but the conduct of the younger Pitt in 1783 is much less easily explained. Shelburne, beyond all other men, had brought Pitt into a foremost place, and he had established the strongest

[1] There is a very curious letter of Burke's, undated, but evidently written long before 1782, to his cousin, Mr. Nagle, who had made an application to Shelburne for some favour, without success. Burke says: 'Between ourselves, and I would not have it go further, there are, I believe, few who can do less with Lord Shelburne than myself. He had formerly at several times professed much friendship to me; but whenever I came to try the ground, let the matter have been never so trifling, I always found it to fail under me. It is indeed long since he has made even professions. With many eminent qualities, he has some singularities in his character. He is suspicious and whimsical, and perhaps if I stood better with him than I do, my recommendation would not have the greatest weight in the world.'—Prior's *Life of Burke*, ii. 526.

[2] Lord Holland's *Hist. of the Whig Party*, i. 45.

claim upon his gratitude. He appears to have wished to bring him into the Cabinet in the Rockingham ministry.[1] He made him Chancellor of the Exchequer in his own administration, and when he was defeated by the Coalition, he warmly recommended Pitt as his successor. There had been no quarrel, no apparent coldness between them; yet when George Rose, who was then burning with hostility against Shelburne, met Pitt in Paris, almost immediately after the accession of the Coalition to power, he found in the course of a very confidential conversation that Pitt so far shared his feelings, that he was perfectly resolved to have no future connection with that statesman.[2] And this intention was not hastily expressed. When the Coalition which had overthrown Shelburne was itself swept away by a fierce outburst of popular opinion, and when Pitt was constructing a new ministry chiefly out of the remains of the former ministry of Shelburne, he positively refused to include Shelburne in his administration; nor did he in the smallest degree consult his former chief about his political arrangements. Nothing, indeed, could be more flattering and more decorous than his language about him; he was quite ready to offer him a marquisate and to give him hopes of a dukedom; but on one thing he was fully resolved—that he would not admit him into his Cabinet, or permit him to exercise any political influence. Nor does the public voice seem to have in any degree condemned Pitt for this conduct. It is a singularly curious fact that the explosion of popular indignation against the Coalition which overturned the ministry of Shelburne never appears to have thrown the faintest or most transient gleam of popularity on that statesman. His popular nickname of Malagrida, derived

[1] See Fitzmaurice's *Life of Shelburne*, iii. 136.
[2] Rose's *Diaries*, i. 32.

from a noted Jesuit who had lately been executed in Portugal, and the common caricatures representing him as Guy Fawkes engaged in blowing up his colleagues, seem to show that the popular estimate of him was not very different from that of politicians.

There is certainly nothing in the actions of Shelburne to justify this extreme unpopularity. Much of it was, I believe, simply due to an artificial, overstrained, and affectedly obsequious manner, but much also to certain faults of character, which it is not difficult to detect. Most of the portraits that were drawn of him concur in representing him as a harsh, cynical, and sarcastic judge of the motives of others; extremely suspicious; jealous and reserved in his dealings with his colleagues; accustomed to pursue tenaciously ends of his own, which he did not frankly communicate, and frequently passing from a language of great superciliousness and arrogance to a strain of profuse flattery.[1] A statesman who combined these traits was tolerably sure to be distrusted and disliked. Men who came in close contact with him complained of the difficulty 'of separating his intentions from his verbiage and professions,' of his 'evident intention to make ciphers of his colleagues,' of his known wish 'to be absolute,' 'to absorb all power,' to make others 'his puppets.' His own writings, which have

[1] George Rose, who had served under him, describes him as 'sometimes passionate or unreasonable, betraying suspicions of others entirely groundless, and at other times offensively flattering.' In another place he accuses him of 'a suspicion of almost everyone he had intercourse with, a want of sincerity, and a habit of listening to every talebearer who would give him intelligence or news of any sort,' of 'alternate violence and flattery.' —Rose's *Diaries*, i. 25, 27, 28. Compare on the character of Shelburne the numerous notices in Horace Walpole, the *Buckingham Papers*, Fox's *Correspondence*, Holland's *Hist. of the Whig Party*, and Lady Minto's *Life of Sir G. Elliot*, with the remarks of Lord E. Fitzmaurice in his *Life of Shelburne*, ii. 164–176.

recently been published, go far to corroborate some parts of this unpleasing picture, for while they show clearly that he was a man of considerably more than common ability, they reveal also the contemptuous, malignant, and depreciatory judgments which he formed of his contemporaries, and, among others, of Chatham, with whom he was most closely connected, and for whom he was accustomed to express in public the highest reverence. He had a few sincere admirers, and among them was Jeremy Bentham, to whom he showed much kindness, and who has spoken in emphatic terms of his genuine goodness and his strong sympathy with popular causes. But there are touches even in Bentham's portrait which agree curiously with the language of Shelburne's enemies and with the popular estimate of his character. 'He had a wildness about him, and conceived groundless suspicions about nothing at all.' 'There was a prodigious deal of ambiguity in the general tenor of his language on party subjects.' 'He had a sort of systematic plan for gaining people.' 'There was artifice in him . . . a curious mixture of what was natural and what was factitious.' 'He had a horror of the clan [of the Whig aristocracy] and looked towards them with great bitterness of feeling.'[1]

He had been very conspicuous in denouncing the policy and character of North and the American policy of the late Government, and he had more than once severely censured the intrusion of the royal influence into parliamentary politics. In 1770 he delivered a speech inveighing against the whole system of King's friends, and eulogised, in terms to which later events give a remarkable significance, one of the writings in which Burke maintained the necessity of disciplined party government. He spoke with much bitterness of

[1] Fitzmaurice's *Life of Shelburne*, ii. 173–176.

'a set of men, who, on his Majesty's accession to the throne of these realms, enlisted under the banner of the Earl of Bute; who impudently call themselves the King's friends, but who were in reality nobody's friends but their own; who have acted without principle with every administration, sometimes supporting and sometimes betraying them according as it served their views of interest.' 'This,' he added, 'is that secret influence, and if that noble lord or his adherents want to be further informed, I refer them to an excellent pamphlet just published, called "Thoughts on the Cause of the present Discontents."'[1] In his later policy, however, it was his evident desire to stand aloof from party organisations, and, without abandoning to any serious extent any political principle, to employ those organisations, for his own ends.

This policy was, no doubt, imitated from that of Chatham, but Shelburne had neither the commanding genius and popularity, nor the transparent uprightness of his great master, and he was entirely without real skill in the management of men. He was accused of petty artifices which deceived no one and which were strangely unworthy of his undoubted abilities. Walpole asserts that he tried to ingratiate himself with the King by expressing to Thurlow an unbounded admiration for the royal genius, and that Thurlow, instead of reporting the words, as was expected, in the Cabinet, reported them everywhere else, as a proof of Shelburne's flattery.[2] Lord Loughborough, who was a good judge of the qualities needed for intrigue, said of Shelburne that his 'art had a strong twang of a board-

[1] Fitzmaurice's *Life of Shelburne*, ii. 204.

[2] *Last Journals*, ii. 541. Walpole adds: 'Artful as Lord Shelburne affected to be, it is certain that his art was so clumsy, so gross, or so ill-timed, and so contradictory to itself, that he could not have fallen so soon as he did if he had had no art at all.'

ing-school education, and resembled much more a cunning woman's than an able man's address.'[1] Shelburne himself constantly professed a complete disdain for political art, and declared, in language that was evidently borrowed from Chatham, that he would know nothing of the management of the House of Commons and would throw himself upon the people alone for support.[2] It does not appear to me that he was ever in truth a corrupt politician, and many of his most bitter enmities must be simply ascribed to his disdain or incapacity for party management, and to his neglect of some of his most valuable subordinates. But he never discovered the secret of making himself trusted, either in the country or in the Cabinet.

It was extremely unfortunate for the Whig party that a man of this turn of character should have been found among its leaders, for in Thurlow the Government had already one formidable element of dissension, and he was certain to inform the King of any discord that arose in the Cabinet. The differences between Shelburne and Rockingham on specific points were so slight that they could hardly have affected the stability of the Administration if there had been any real confidence and friendship between the two ministers. The policy of restricting royal influence had been asserted by Shelburne quite as strongly as by Rockingham. It was his follower Dunning who had introduced the famous resolution of 1780 asserting the necessity of diminishing the influence of the Crown. The chief measures to be pursued had been actually agreed on before the Administration was formed, and as late as November 1781 Shelburne told Rockingham that he wished never to see more than two parties in the State, the party of the

[1] *Auckland Correspondence*, i. 19.
[2] *Buckingham Papers*, i. 302.

Crown and the party of the people, and that a third party distinct from either would be ruinous to both.[1] But only a few weeks had passed when it became evident to close observers that the Cabinet was profoundly divided, and that the two Secretaries regarded one another with an intense personal dislike. In the Cabinet, Shelburne was usually supported by the votes of Thurlow, Grafton, Camden, and Ashburton, while Richmond, Rockingham, Lord John Cavendish, and Keppel steadily supported Fox. Conway, as usual, hung irresolutely between the two parties, but without attempting to exercise the power which his casting-vote might have given.

The letters of Fox show clearly the rapid progress of the dissension. On April 12, 1782, he writes to Fitzpatrick: 'We had a Cabinet this morning in which in my opinion there were more symptoms of what we had always apprehended than had ever hitherto appeared. The subject was Burke's Bill, or rather the message introductory to it. Nothing was concluded, but in the Lord Chancellor there was so marked an opposition, and in your brother-in-law [Shelburne] so much inclination to help the Chancellor, that we got into something like a warm debate. I told them I was determined to bring the matter to a crisis, as I am, and I think a few days will convince them that they must yield entirely. If they do not, we must go to war again, that is all. I am sure I am ready.'[2] On the 15th he writes to the same correspondent: 'We have had another very teasing and wrangling Cabinet;' and on the 28th he had already begun to anticipate the downfall of the ministry. 'With respect to affairs here,' he writes, 'they are really in such a state as is very difficult to describe; I feel them to be worse than

[1] Fitzmaurice's *Life of Shelburne*, iii. 122.
[2] Fox's *Correspondence*, i. 314.

they were, and yet I do not know what particular circumstance to state as the cause of this feeling. Shelburne shows himself more and more every day, is ridiculously jealous of my encroaching on his department and wishes very much to encroach upon mine. He hardly liked my having a letter from Grattan, or my having written one to Lord Charlemont. He affects the minister more and more every day, and is, I believe, perfectly confident that the King intends to make him so. Provided we can stay in long enough to have given a good stout blow to the influence of the Crown, I do not think it much signifies how soon we get out after, and leave him and the Chancellor to make such government as they can, and this I think we shall be able to do.'[1]

Parliament met for the despatch of business on April 8, and already the popularity of the administration had been slightly dimmed. A peerage which the Rockingham section of the ministry asked for Sir Fletcher Norton, who was little trusted on any side, was not well received, and there were many violent politicians who would have gladly seen Lord North and some of his colleagues impeached, or at least the pension of 4,000*l.* a year which North had obtained on retiring from office severely censured. The first business which occupied the attention of Parliament was the state of Ireland, and the necessity of conceding the demand for legislative independence which Grattan and the Volunteers had made. This subject, however, will be elsewhere more conveniently examined, and it will be here sufficient to say that the concessions made were such as for a time satisfied public opinion in Ireland without either shaking or dividing the ministry at home. The promised measures for destroying corrupt influence in Parliament were then taken up and pursued with great

[1] Fox's *Correspondence*, i. 316.

energy and promptitude. The Bill for excluding contractors from the House of Commons passed without difficulty through that House, but encountered a strenuous though unsuccessful resistance in the Lords. In the course of the discussion the division in the ministry became scandalously apparent. Thurlow took an open and prominent part in opposing the Government measure, and although Shelburne supported it, he took occasion to pay compliments to the Chancellor, which, as Fox afterwards wrote, 'very much scandalised all good men.'[1] His follower, Lord Ashburton, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, moved and carried through the Lords an amendment excepting one class of contractors from the operation of the Bill, but Fox induced the House of Commons to reject it.

The very important measure disfranchising revenue officers was next introduced, and carried in spite of much opposition. It was stated in the debate that no less than 12,000 of these officers had been appointed under the late Government, and that they altogether numbered in England, according to some accounts, more than 40,000, according to others not less than 60,000, in an electoral body of about 300,000.[2] Their disfranchisement was by far the most serious blow that had ever been administered to Government influence at elections, and it was a signal example of the truth of the assertion of Burke that disfranchisement may sometimes tend quite as much as enfranchisement to create a pure and genuine organ of public opinion. A measure which had for some time been pending, for the disfranchisement of the borough of Cricklade on account of its enormous corruption, was carried in spite of the violent opposition of the Chancellor, who in the course

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[1] Fox's *Correspondence*, i. 317. *Parl. Hist.* xxii. 1356–1361.

[2] *Parl. Hist.* xxii. 1337, 1345; Adolphus, iii. 361.

of the debate was accused by his colleague, the Duke of Richmond, of resisting indiscriminately every measure of regulation and improvement.

Nearly at the same time the House of Commons consented by 115 to 47 to take the somewhat humiliating step of expunging from its journals the resolution of February 1769, asserting the incapacity of Wilkes to sit, after re-election, in the House of Commons from which he had been expelled. Wilkes himself introduced the subject in a temperate and skilful speech, and, although Fox declared that he had never changed his opinion in favour of the original resolution, the other ministers were on the side of the majority.

It was evident that the Government was far from realising that ideal of disciplined unity which Burke had pronounced to be indispensable if English politics were to regain a healthy tone. The next task which lay before the ministers was to carry out the great scheme of economical reform which Burke had framed and introduced under Lord North. As is usually the case, they found that they could not, under the responsibility of office, carry out everything which they had recommended when in opposition, and there were many not wholly unjustifiable taunts that several offices which Burke had very lately denounced as grossly corrupt and indefensible were left absolutely untouched. In formerly introducing the measure Burke had made a speech of great length and power, displaying all that mastery of detail which was not among the least wonderful of his gifts, but he now introduced the Bill with only a few words, and spoke as little as possible during the debates, and in a tone of evident discouragement. The explanation of this discouragement is not difficult to find. The King was bitterly hostile to the scheme, and Rockingham was extremely anxious to carry it with his concurrence, and without taking any step that

could in any way infringe upon his dignity or his comfort.[1] In order that the measure should not wear the appearance of an attack upon the royal authority, he insisted that a Royal Message should be first sent down recommending reform and regulation in the civil establishment. The King very sullenly consented. He tried, as he afterwards told Lord Shelburne, even to avoid reading the Message that professed to emanate from himself, and when Rockingham had obliged him to read it, he did not utter a syllable of comment.[2] The Message, however, was duly introduced into both Houses; and Shelburne and Rockingham in the Lords, and Burke and Fox in the Commons, vied with each other in extolling the magnanimity of the Sovereign;[3] but the terms of the economical measure were still unsettled. Rockingham desired strongly to carry Burke's original scheme wholly or nearly unaltered.[4] The King, though he would hold no discussion on the subject with his Prime Minister, or with the minister who had framed and was to introduce the measure, wrote a long confidential letter to Shelburne pointing out his violent objection to several parts of the original scheme. He wrote in a strain of undisguised hostility about Rockingham, and he authorised Shelburne to show his letter to Thurlow, but to no one else.[5] The Bill was extremely popular among the country gentlemen, and it was impossible altogether to reject it, but

[1] See his very able and very respectful memorial to the King. —Albemarle's *Life of Rockingham*, ii. 477–480.

[2] Fitzmaurice's *Life of Shelburne*, iii. 157.

[3] Shelburne said 'he could undertake to pledge himself to their lordships that the present Message was a departure from the general rule; it was the voluntary language of the Sovereign himself, proceeding from the heart.'—*Parl. Hist.* xxii. 1273. This was said three days after the King had written to Shelburne in the terms I have just described.

[4] Fitzmaurice's *Life of Shelburne*, pp. 157, 160.

[5] Ibid. pp. 155–159.

Shelburne and the Chancellor laboured in the Cabinet with some success to restrict it. It was, however, after all deductions, a great measure, which, together with the disfranchisement of the revenue officers and the exclusion of contractors from Parliament, rendered political life in England much purer than it had hitherto been. More than forty considerable employments were cut off. It was provided that the pension list should be gradually reduced to 90,000*l*. The secret service fund expended within the kingdom was limited to 10,000*l*. a year, and a saving of more than 72,000*l*. a year was effected.[1] It was immediately followed by another Bill introduced by Burke to regulate his own office of Paymaster-General, cutting off the enormous profits which had hitherto made it by far the most lucrative in the Government.

If a Government is to be estimated simply by the net result of what it has achieved, it must be acknowledged that few ministries have done so much to elevate and to purify English political life as the weak and divided Administration of Rockingham. The popularity, however, of this great measure of economical reform was diminished by the abandonment of several portions of the original scheme, and also by the fact that arrears of the civil list were at the same time revealed, amounting to no less than 296,000*l*. The discharge of this debt was provided for in the Act, and it was cited in the preamble as the motive for the retrenchments. A useful measure was also carried, under the influence of Shelburne, obliging future holders of patent places in the colonies to reside there.

Among the members who had entered Parliament for the first time at the election of 1780, there were two who had even now risen to considerable impor-

[1] 22 Geo. III. c. 82.

tance. Sheridan had begun public life in his thirtieth year, and he had already made a great reputation in another field as the author of 'The Rivals,' 'The Duenna,' 'The School for Scandal,' and 'The Critic.' It is probable that his literary achievements were in Parliament rather a disadvantage to him than otherwise, and his first speech does not appear to have been successful, but the House soon discovered that he was one of the most brilliant of debaters; and Rockingham, to whom he had firmly attached himself, made him Under-Secretary of State in his ministry. The position of the young son of Chatham, on the other hand, was a very ambiguous one, and it was becoming evident to good judges that it was likely to be a very great one. Though William Pitt was only just of age when he entered Parliament, he had already become, under the excellent instruction of his father, a consummate master of language and of parliamentary retort, and no such young man had ever possessed to an equal degree the qualities that are needed for a great parliamentary career. With stainless morals, with a complete concentration of all his powers on the aims of public life, he combined an almost unfailing self-control, indomitable courage, boundless self-confidence, a judgment of the condition and prospects of parties which was at once singularly acute and strangely mature.

His first speech was in February 1781, in defence of Burke's Bill for economical reform. As the son of the great Lord Chatham he was secure of the attention of the House, and his wonderful command of accurate and well-poised English, his perfect skill and self-possession in debate, and his clear and sonorous voice at once showed that he was destined to be one of the greatest of debaters. In the beginning of his career he showed no desire to conciliate the King or the Tories. In a debate in June 1781, he denounced the American

war as 'most accursed, wicked, barbarous, cruel, unnatural, unjust and diabolical;' and in the closing months of Lord North's Administration he was one of its fiercest assailants. The leaders of the Opposition warmly welcomed their new ally. 'Pitt,' it was once said to Fox, 'will be one of the first men in the House of Commons.' 'He is so already,' was the reply, and he lost no opportunity of eulogising him in public. 'He is not a chip of the old block,' said Burke, 'he is the old block itself.' As early as December 1781, Horace Walpole noticed that he had shown logical abilities in one of his speeches which made men 'doubt whether he would not prove superior even to Charles Fox.' It was, perhaps, still more significant that Henry Dundas, the Lord Advocate, and one of the most sagacious members of the Government of North, by his elaborate compliments to Pitt, showed an evident desire to detach himself from the Administration, and to connect his fortunes with those of the young rising statesman.

It soon became clear that Pitt was designing to act on a separate and independent plan, and that he did not wish to throw in his fortunes with an Administration which, as he clearly saw, was wanting in the essential elements of stability. About ten days before the fall of the ministry of North he astonished the House of Commons by a declaration that he could not expect to form part of a new Administration, and that he felt himself bound to declare that he 'never would accept a subordinate situation.' The words are said to have escaped from him inadvertently in debate, and some ridicule was excited by the amazing self-confidence and ambition which could alone enable a young man of twenty-two, absolutely without experience of official life, to announce that he would only take office as a Cabinet minister at a time when Cabinets seldom consisted of more than seven, and never of more than eleven mem-

bers. His resolution, however, though perhaps imprudently and prematurely expressed, was fully formed, and when, on the fall of the North Ministry, Shelburne offered him a choice of subordinate positions—and, among others, the post of Vice-Treasurer of Ireland, with a salary of 5,000*l.* a year—Pitt, who was then a young barrister with an income of less than 300*l.* a year, unhesitatingly refused, and preferred to give the Government an independent and general, but unpledged, support.

The question of parliamentary reform was one with which the Government, on account of its internal divisions, could not deal, and which at the same time aroused great interest and enthusiasm in the country. This question Pitt resolved to make his own, and on May 7, 1782, he moved for a committee to inquire into the state of the parliamentary representation. In the course of his speech he inveighed against 'the corrupt influence of the Crown,' in a strain which gave little promise of his future career. He denounced with great vehemence the whole system of Treasury and nomination boroughs, and complained that some cities and boroughs 'were more within the jurisdiction of the Carnatic than the limits of Great Britain,' and that the Nabob of Arcot had seven or eight members in the House.[1] He brought forward, however, no definite plan. He was supported from the ministerial benches by Sir G. Savile and by Fox. The latter stated that 'in all the great questions for the welfare of the country he had observed that the country members, who were most likely to be independent, had uniformly voted in a proportion of five-sixths for the question, but had been overpowered by the members for the rotten boroughs.' Pitt's motion was rejected by 161 to 141. It has been noticed that

[1] *Parl. Hist.* xxii. 1416–1422.

the reformers never again had so good a division till 1831. A few days later both Fox and Pitt spoke in favour of a Bill for shortening the duration of Parliament, which Burke strenuously opposed.

The dissensions in the Cabinet still continued, and on several questions of minor Court employments, Fox and Shelburne were opposed; the latter representing especially the wishes of the King. On May 5, Walpole wrote to Horace Mann: 'Fox already shines as greatly in place as he did in opposition, though infinitely more difficult a task. He is now as indefatigable as he was idle. He has perfect temper, and not only good humour but good nature, and, which is the first quality in a Prime Minister of a free country, has more common sense than any man, with amazing parts that are neither ostentatious nor affected.' The material features of the Administration, he elsewhere said, 'were the masterly abilities of Charles Fox and the intrigues of Lord Shelburne. The former displayed such facility in comprehending and executing all business as charmed all who approached him. . . . He seized at once the important points of every affair. . . . His good-humour, frankness, and sincerity pleased, and yet inspired a respect which he took no other pains to attract. The foreign ministers were in admiration of him. . . . While Fox thus unfolded his character so advantageously, Shelburne was busied in devoting himself to the King, and in traversing Lord Rockingham and Fox in every point.' The letters of Fox himself show great uneasiness. Thus, writing to Fitzpatrick on May 11, he says that, in the debate on Pitt's reform motion, the Lord Advocate 'chose to speak in the most offensive manner to me personally by marking in the most pointed way the different opinion he entertained of the purity of Pitt's intentions and of mine. . . . I cannot help suspecting,' he continued, 'that he means to show that he does not

consider me as a person who has power to hurt him, and that he is very well with those who have; for he always calls himself a supporter of the present Government, and has, I am pretty sure, established a sort of connection with your brother-in-law [Shelburne]. Lord Rockingham's illness, which is now over, has prevented me from bringing this matter to the crisis to which it must come, and shall come, if I am to remain the King's minister in the House of Commons.' Speaking of Pitt, he writes: 'He is very civil and obliging, profuse of compliments in public; but he has more than once taken a line that has alarmed me. . . . I am satisfied he will be the man that the old system, revived in the person of Lord S., will attempt to bring forward for its support. I am satisfied that he is incapable of giving in to this with his eyes open; but how he may be led into it step by step is more than I can answer for.'[1]

It is impossible, I think, to read these letters without perceiving that a breach was imminent, and could not long be postponed. 'It was grievous to me,' wrote the Duke of Grafton, speaking of this time, 'to remark the daily jealousies which even reached often to altercation between Mr. Fox and Lord Shelburne; the latter, I think, differed more from system and dislike; the other with an honest warmth could not brook such constant aggressions.' 'Lord Shelburne's jealousy of Mr. Fox was daily more observable;' 'I am now satisfied that Lord Shelburne and Mr. Fox were too different in character and principles to have acted at all together, and the latter had the sagacity plainly to perceive it.'[2]

The first task of the Government was to negotiate a peace, but in this momentous undertaking the two

[1] Fox's *Correspondence*, i. 319–325.

[2] Grafton's MSS. *Autobiography*. This work (which has been courteously placed at my disposal) contains a vivid picture of the dissensions in the Cabinet.

Secretaries of State were continually at variance.[1] Fox was extremely desirous of uniting Russia and Prussia with England in a defensive league, and at the same time of detaching Holland, which had not yet recognised the independence of America, and which was not bound to her by any engagement. In order to effect these objects he was prepared to recognise frankly the principles of maritime law contended for by the armed neutrality, and to make a treaty of peace with Holland upon the footing of free navigation according to the treaty of 1764; and he wrote a powerful letter, which was to be submitted to the King of Prussia, defining his policy and asking for the support of that monarch. Shelburne, without apparently openly opposing, strongly discouraged these measures, disliked the introduction of the Northern Powers into the negotiation, and appears to have looked forward to a time when France would be the ally of England. Fox also desired immediately and unconditionally to acknowledge the independence of America. Such a measure, he said, would have an appearance of magnanimity, which would be very favourable to the English cause, and he predicted that if America were thus at once assured of all she desired, she would drop off from the Confederation, or would at least cease from active operations in the war; that the troops in America might be withdrawn, and be employed if necessary against France, and that the negotiation with France could be pursued on a much better footing if the avowed object for which the French went to war, and the only advantage the French had still much prospect of gaining, had been already conceded. Shelburne, on the other hand, strongly supported by the

[1] Compare Russell's *Life of Fox*, i. 299–303; Fox's *Correspondence*, i. 330–343. Fitzmaurice's *Life of Shelburne*, iii. 166, 167.

King, maintained that the acknowledgment of independence must be reserved for the joint treaty with America and France, and must be deemed one of the chief offers England had to make in the bargain for territory. The question was unfortunately complicated by another consideration. Fox was Secretary for Foreign Affairs, and the negotiation with foreign Powers therefore fell under his department; but as long as the independence of America was unrecognised, it was considered a colony, and therefore in the department of Shelburne. At the same time a general pacification would fall into the department of Fox.

While these things were pending, an event happened which brought to a crisis the difference between the two ministers. The story is a somewhat obscure and intricate one, and, in order to understand it, we must go back to the period when the Rockingham Ministry was first formed.

Just before the resignation of Lord North was known in Paris, Franklin, who was the American Commissioner in that city, had availed himself of a chance opportunity to send a note to Shelburne reminding him of their old friendship, and expressing in general terms his good wishes, and his earnest hope that peace might soon be re-established. When the letter arrived in London, Shelburne was already Secretary of State, and he determined, apparently with the knowledge and approval of his colleagues,[1] to answer it by sending over a confidential agent, who might negotiate informally with Franklin, and ascertain from him the extent of the American demands. He selected for this purpose a Scotch merchant named Oswald, an old friend of his own, and an acquaintance and disciple of Adam Smith. Oswald possessed by marriage large estates in America,

[1] Fitzmaurice's *Life of Shelburne*, iii. 175.

and he had been already more than once consulted on American subjects by the ministers.[1] He arrived in Paris on April 12, 1782, bearing private letters from Shelburne. Franklin received him with much cordiality, but told him that America could only negotiate in concert with France, and that nothing authoritative could be done till the arrival of the other two Commissioners, Jay and Adams. He introduced him, however, to Vergennes, and he had himself a long conversation with him, in which he put forward some rather startling ideas. In order to secure a real reconciliation, he said, the party which had done the injury ought to make reparation to the injured. The English and their Indian allies had burnt many villages and towns in America. Perhaps the Americans might ask for reparation, though on this point Franklin professed to know nothing; but at all events it would be very wise for England to offer it. He proposed, therefore, that England should voluntarily cede to America Canada and Nova Scotia, and that a sufficient quantity of the waste lands there should be sold to indemnify the Americans for their private losses, and the loyalists for the confiscation of their estates.

When it is remembered that the Americans had not only not taken Canada, but had been driven from it completely defeated, and also that the Canadian people had shown in the clearest and most emphatic manner that they had no wish to be detached from the Crown, or to be connected with New England, the proposition of Franklin will appear a very audacious one. Oswald, however, appears to have received it with a favour which convinced the acute American that he was one of the most desirable of negotiators. Franklin conducted his

[1] For some further particulars about Oswald, see Lewis, *Administrations of Great Britain*, 1783 1830, p. 81.

part of the conversation chiefly from a paper which he held in his hands, and Oswald asked permission to show this paper to Shelburne. After some hesitation, Franklin consented; but in order that there should be no mistake about its completely informal character, he wrote upon it: 'This is mere conversation between Mr. Oswald and Mr. Franklin, as the former is not empowered to make propositions, and the latter cannot make any without the concurrence of his colleagues.' He then sent Oswald back to England with a letter to Lord Shelburne, warmly eulogising the negotiator, and expressing his wish that he might be the sole channel of communication between them.[1]

Shelburne at once communicated the letter of Franklin to his colleagues, and they inferred from it that the writer was much disposed to peace. The notes of conversation, however, he showed to no one except Lord Ashburton, nor did he send any answer to them. They remained for a night in Shelburne's possession, and were then returned to Franklin. Considering the entirely informal character of the conversation to which they related, it can hardly be said that Shelburne was bound as a matter of official duty to communicate them, though it appears to me that the substance at least would certainly have been communicated if the two Secretaries had been on really friendly and confidential terms. In consequence of Franklin's letter the Cabinet determined on April 23 to send Oswald back 'with authority to name Paris as the place, and to settle with Dr. Franklin the most convenient time for setting on foot a negotiation for a general peace, and to represent to him that the principal points in contemplation are the allowance of independence to America upon Great

[1] See Fitzmaurice's *Life of Shelburne*, iii. 175–182. Franklin's *Works*, ix. 247–252.

Britain's being restored to the situation she was placed in by the treaty of 1763, and that Mr. Fox shall submit to the consideration of the King a proper person to make a similar communication to M. de Vergennes.'[1] The person selected by Fox for this latter communication was Thomas Grenville, the son of George Grenville. Oswald reached Paris on May 4, and he had several conversations with Franklin before the arrival of Grenville on the 8th.[2]

It is not easy to say what impression the paper containing the notes of Franklin's conversation about Canada had made on the mind of Shelburne, or what impression Shelburne meant to convey to the mind of Franklin. He placed in the hands of Oswald a paper of instructions in which Oswald was directed to 'tell Franklin candidly and confidentially Lord Shelburne's situation with the King; that he was sent for to form the ministry; that he would make no use of his situation but to keep his word with mankind; that he was under as little apprehension of being deceived himself as unwilling to deceive others; in short, that he knew the bottom to be sound.' He instructed Oswald to demand in the first place free trade, the payment of English debts incurred before the war, and the restoration of the loyalists to a full enjoyment of their rights and privileges, and he alluded in these words to the private paper: 'The private paper desires Canada for three reasons: 1st. By way of reparation.—Answer. No reparation can be heard of. 2nd. To prevent future wars.—Answer. It is hoped that some more friendly method will be found. 3rd. Loyalists—as a fund of indemnification to them.—Answer. No independence to be acknowledged without their being taken care of.'[3]

[1] Fitzmaurice's *Life of Shelburne*, iii. 183, 184.

[2] Fox's *Correspondence*, i. 347.

[3] Fitzmaurice's *Life of Shelburne*, iii. 188, 189.

At the same time he wrote to Franklin: 'Mr. Oswald is instructed to communicate to you my thoughts upon the principal objects to be settled;' and Oswald told Franklin that the private paper seemed to have made a favourable impression on Shelburne's mind, that he had reason to believe that the matter might be settled to the satisfaction of the Americans, but that it must not be mentioned for the present. He at the same time announced that it was determined that 'Mr. Fox, from whose department that communication is necessarily to proceed, shall send a proper person who may confer and settle immediately with M. de Vergennes' on the peace.[1]

Oswald returned to England on the 14th. Franklin, who spoke in high terms of his 'simplicity and honesty,' and who was doubtless of opinion that he could influence him more easily than Grenville, was greatly disappointed, and he wrote to Shelburne expressing his warm hope that Oswald might soon return, and his belief that 'his moderation, prudent counsels, and sound judgment' would contribute much to a speedy and lasting peace.

Grenville in the mean time had found his interviews with Vergennes exceedingly unsatisfactory. It is not surprising that at the end of a war in which England was reduced to extreme distress, France should decline to accept as a basis of peace the treaty of 1763, which was negotiated when France was in the lowest state of humiliation, although it was united with a recognition of the independence of America, which was the ostensible object for which she had drawn the sword. The impression of Grenville, and the impression of the English ministers, was that peace could not be obtained from France this year on honourable terms, and that the chief result to be looked for was a separation of

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[1] Fitzmaurice's *Life of Shelburne*, iii. 190, 191. Franklin's *Works*, ix. 267–269.

France from her allies. On May 18 the Cabinet determined that full authority should be given to Grenville to make propositions of peace to the belligerent Powers on the basis already mentioned, and to receive and report to Fox any counter-propositions of Vergennes; and on the 23rd, when the news of the great victory of Rodney had materially modified the situation, the Cabinet authorised Grenville 'to propose the independency of America in the first instance, instead of making it a condition of a general treaty.'[1]

Fox maintained that this direction was a complete and final recognition of American independence, and therefore placed the American negotiation wholly in the hands of the Secretary for Foreign Affairs, but Shelburne, maintaining that the recognition was conditional on the conclusion of a general treaty of peace, believed that it left the matter still under his own control as Secretary for the Colonies.[2] Fox would gladly have placed the entire negotiation in the hands of Grenville, but the majority of the Cabinet determined, in consequence of the letter of Franklin, to send back Oswald to Paris, though as the Enabling Bill permitting British subjects to negotiate with the revolted colonists had not yet passed, it was not possible to give him any formal powers. The King was warmly in favour of the step, and in one of his letters to Shelburne he significantly suggested that Oswald 'might be a useful check on that part of the negotiation which was in other hands.'[3] Oswald showed no disposition to quarrel with Grenville. He was perfectly frank in his dealings with him, and he was much more frank in his dealings with Franklin than any prudent negotiator would have been. If, indeed, the account which Franklin has given in his

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[1] Fox's *Correspondence*, i. 357.
[2] Ibid. 439.
[3] Fitzmaurice's *Shelburne*, iii. 184.

diary be correct, Oswald must have been to an astonishing degree unfit for the task he had undertaken. He appears to have informed the American negotiator that he had left the English Secretaries of State well disposed for peace, but in his own opinion too much elated by Rodney's victory, which they appeared to him to rate too highly. Peace he considered absolutely necessary to England. Without it even the payments of the national debt might soon be stopped. 'Our enemies may now do what they please with us. They have the ball at their feet, and we hope they will show their moderation and their magnanimity.' The English ministers, and especially Shelburne, reckoned much upon Franklin to extricate England from her terrible situation.[1] As for the more specific points at issue, Oswald remarked that he personally quite agreed with Franklin that the Americans could not be expected to make compensation to the loyalists, and he was strongly in favour of ceding Canada to America. He had done his best, he said, to convince the English ministers that this cession should be made, and although he had not altogether succeeded, he intimated that he was not without hopes.[2]

This was the language which an English envoy appears to have used to the representative of a hostile Power, and in this most critical moment of English history the whole negotiation was entrusted by the Cabinet to Oswald and to a young man of twenty-six, who was entirely inexperienced in diplomacy. It was at the same time clearly understood by Franklin, and by the French statesmen, that the two envoys represented jealous and even hostile ministers.

The sequel may soon be told. On May 30, Grenville informed Fox that Franklin had shown much disposition

[1] Franklin's *Works*, ix. 311, 312. [2] Ibid. p. 316.

to enter fully into the points that were necessary to establish a solid union between England and America, and had promised in a few days to write down the heads and to discuss them in detail;[1] but immediately after the arrival of Oswald, Franklin became much more reserved, and on June 4 Grenville wrote a very remarkable confidential letter to Fox. He mentioned the mortification with which he had observed the changed attitude of Franklin, but stated that it had become fully intelligible to him after an interview he had just had with Oswald. 'Mr. Oswald,' he writes, 'told me that Lord Shelburne had proposed to him, when last in England, to take a commission to treat with the American ministers; that upon his mentioning it to Franklin now, it seemed perfectly agreeable to him, and even to be what he had very much wished; Mr. Oswald adding that he wished only to assist the business. . . . This intended appointment has effectually stopped Franklin's mouth to me, and when he is told that Mr. Oswald is to be the commissioner to treat with him, it is but natural that he should reserve his confidence for the quarter so pointed out to him; nor does this secret seem only known to Franklin, as Lafayette said laughingly yesterday that he had *just left Lord Shelburne's ambassador at Passy*. Indeed, this is not the first moment of a separate negotiation, for Mr. Oswald, suspecting, by something that I dropped, that Franklin had talked to me about Canada (though, by the bye, he never had), told me this circumstance as follows: When he went to England the last time but one, he carried with him a paper entrusted to him by Franklin under condition that it should be shown only to Lord Shelburne and returned into his own hands at Passy. This paper, under the title of "Notes of a Conversation," contained

[1] Fox's *Correspondence*, i. 355.

an idea of Canada being spontaneously ceded by England to the thirteen provinces in order that Congress might sell the unappropriated lands and make a fund thereby, in order to compensate the damages done by the English army, and even those, too, sustained by the royalists. This paper, given with many precautions for fear of its being known to the French Court, to whom it was supposed not to be agreeable, Mr. Oswald showed to Lord Shelburne, who, after keeping it a day, as Mr. Oswald supposes to show to the King, returned it to him, and it was by him brought back to Franklin. I say nothing to the proposition itself, to the impolicy of bringing a *strange* neighbourhood to the Newfoundland fishery, or to the little reason that England would naturally see, in having lost thirteen provinces, to give away a fourteenth; but I mention it to show you an early trace of separate negotiation which, perhaps, you did not before know.'

Under these circumstances Grenville urgently recommended Fox to recall him, and to send some person of high rank, such as Lord Fitzwilliam, who might conduct alone the whole negotiation. 'You would by that means,' he said, 'recover within your compass the essential part which is now out of it; nor do I see how Lord Shelburne could object to such an appointment, which would in every respect much facilitate the business. . . . You may depend upon it, people here have already got an idea of a difference between the two offices; and consider how much that idea will be assisted by the embarrassments arising from two people negotiating to the same purpose, but under different and differing authorities, concealing and disguising from one another what with the best intentions they could hardly make known. . . . I cannot fight a daily battle with Mr. Oswald and *his* Secretary; it would be neither for the advantage of

the business, for your interest or your credit, or mine. . . . You have but one of two things to do; either to adopt the proposition of a new *dignified* peer's appointment, which, being single, may bring back the business to you by comprehending it all in one, or Lord Shelburne must have his minister here, and Mr. Fox his, by doing which Mr. Fox will be pretty near as much out of the secret—at least of what is most essential—as if he had nobody here.'[1]

It is not surprising that Fox's answer to this letter should have displayed extreme astonishment and indignation. It appears, indeed, that Oswald had on one occasion proposed to Fox the cession of Canada, and that Fox had at once expressed his hostility to the idea,[2] but he now learnt for the first time that a paper containing this proposition had been sent by Franklin to his brother Secretary, and had been laid, as Grenville believed, before the King, and he naturally inferred from the language of his correspondent that this paper had a formal character of negotiation which it did not in truth possess. He appears to have been wholly ignorant of Shelburne's intention of proposing that Oswald should be invested with full powers, which had never been mentioned in the Cabinet though it had been communicated to Franklin, and 'which,' Fox wrote to Grenville, 'was certainly meant for the purpose of diverting Franklin's confidence from you into another channel.' He showed Grenville's letter to Rockingham, Richmond, and Lord J. Cavendish, and they concurred in his sentiments. He strongly maintained that Grenville must remain at his post; that the appointment of Lord Fitzwilliam would be altogether useless, and that the matter

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[1] Fox's *Correspondence*, i. 359–366.

[2] Franklin's *Works*, ix. 316. This rests upon Franklin's report of a conversation of Oswald.

must be at once brought before the Cabinet. The nature of the negotiations in question rendered great caution necessary. If the separate and extremely confidential overtures of Franklin to England were revealed, this would put an end to all hope of a future separate negotiation with America. The Canada paper, therefore, must not be publicly mentioned, but it might be said that 'Shelburne had withheld from our knowledge matters of importance to the negotiation,' and that 'while the King had one avowed and authorised minister at Paris, measures were taken for lessening his credit and for obstructing his inquiries by announcing a new intended commission, of which the Cabinet here had never been apprised.' Fox implored Grenville to send him all further 'proofs of this duplicity of conduct' which he might discover, and intimated that the matter must lead to a positive rupture, or at the least to the recall of Oswald. 'What will be the end of this,' he continued, 'God knows, but I am sure you will agree with me that we cannot suffer a system to go on which is not only dishonourable to us, but evidently ruinous to the affairs of the country. In this instance the mischief done by intercepting, as it were, the very useful information we expected through you from Mr. Franklin is, I fear, in a great degree irremediable; but it is our business, and indeed our duty, to prevent such things for the future.'[1]

There was, no doubt, some exaggeration and misunderstanding in the view that was taken by Fox. The Canada paper was certainly not so important as he imagined. Oswald, though without any formal powers, was in Paris with the full assent of the Cabinet, for the purpose of conferring with Franklin, and Shelburne believed—and it is by no means certain that he was

[1] Fox's *Correspondence*, i. 366–370.

wrong—that the American department was still technically within his special province. Still, the whole transaction shows, as it appears to me, on the part of Shelburne an extreme want of that candour and frankness of communication which was indispensable if a joint negotiation was to prove other than disastrous; and it must be considered in connection with the many other symptoms of jealousy, suspicion, and intrigue, which had appeared since the ministry was formed. The exact particulars of what passed in the Cabinet Councils that followed have not been preserved; but it appears that the majority of the Cabinet, resting upon Franklin's expressed desire to negotiate with Oswald, determined that the best way of arriving at a general pacification was to treat separately with each party; that they refused Fox's demand for the recall of Oswald, and that the Enabling Act being now passed, they agreed to grant him full powers. One reason which appears to have weighed with them was the vague and unsatisfactory language of Vergennes. The ministers inferred from it that he desired to postpone the pacification, and they imagined that peace might still be made separately with America, or at least that America might become so far neutral that the whole energies of England might be concentrated on her European enemies.

This decision was naturally very displeasing to Fox, and he now spoke seriously of resigning, but he resolved to make one more effort. On June 30 he moved in the Cabinet that the independence of America should be unconditionally acknowledged. According to his own view of the matter, this had already been done by the minute of May 23; but Shelburne contended that the meaning of that minute was only that the recognition was to be a price of peace, a conditional offer which might be recalled if the negotiation failed. The practical importance of the motion of Fox was that, if carried, it

would have placed the negotiation with America, as well as the negotiation with the other Powers, indisputably in the province of the Secretary for Foreign Affairs. The Cabinet was usually equally divided, Conway holding the casting-vote; but at this time Rockingham was on his death-bed, and Conway sided with Shelburne, and the motion of Fox was accordingly rejected by a majority of 4. Fox at once announced to his colleagues his intention of resigning, but he abstained from disturbing the last hours of Rockingham by such a step, and the next day Rockingham died.[1]

It was a happy saying of Walpole, that the Crown devolved on the King of England upon the death of Lord Rockingham.[2] The party, indeed, which had made it their object to restrain the royal power now found themselves without any candidate for leadership of acknowledged claims. The Duke of Richmond, it is true, combined in a very eminent degree the abilities of a debater with the position generally required for a leader, and he appears to have considered that he had the best claims to the post; but he was detested by the King and not popular in the country, and he had committed himself to extreme views about Parliamentary Reform. Sir George Savile, who, though a less able man, was universally respected, had retired from public business in the

[1] See Fitzmaurice's *Life of Shelburne*, iii. 218, 219; Fox's *Correspondence*, i. 434–439; Russell's *Life of Fox*, i. 316–320. Franklin quite understood the situation. 'Mr. Oswald,' he wrote, 'appears to have been the choice of Lord Shelburne, Mr. Grenville that of Mr. Secretary Fox. Lord Shelburne is said to have lately acquired much of the King's confidence. Mr. Fox calls himself the minister of the people, and it is certain that his popularity is lately much increased. Lord Shelburne seems to wish to have the management of the treaty, Mr. Fox seems to think it in his department. I hear that the understanding between these ministers is not quite perfect.'—Franklin's *Works*, ix. 335, 336.

[2] Lady Minto's *Life of H. Elliot*, p. 255.

early part of 1781.[1] Lord John Cavendish had neither the ambition nor the ability of a leader. Fox possessed to a transcendent degree the necessary oratorical powers, and he had greatly improved his position during the brief period of his administration, but he was of all politicians the most hated by the King, and a young man of thirty-four, of broken fortunes, of notoriously gambling and dissipated habits, who had very recently suddenly changed his politics, and who was a leading member of the most worthless section of fashionable society, could not command the confidence of the English people. The greatest and wisest man in the ministry was Edmund Burke, but he was not even in the Cabinet; he was looked upon as a needy, though brilliant adventurer, under the patronage of Rockingham; and even if he had belonged to the small circle of governing families, he was, with all his great gifts, utterly destitute of the skill, temper, and tact that are required for managing men and directing a legislative Assembly. Under these circumstances the party selected for their leader the Duke of Portland, a respectable but perfectly undistinguished nobleman, who was chiefly remarkable for his vast expenditure in the Yorkshire elections, and who was now Lord Lieutenant of Ireland; and they proposed him to the King as the successor of Rockingham. The King at once answered that he had made Shelburne First Lord of the Treasury; and Fox and several other members of the Rockingham party immediately resigned.

Whatever may be thought of the wisdom of this step, it must be owned that the position of Fox was an extremely difficult one, for it was impossible for him publicly to explain the differences in the Cabinet and the episode relating to Oswald, which were the chief motives that governed his decision. Public opinion attributed

[1] Nicholls' *Recollections*, i. 41.

his resignation to an unworthy personal dislike, and persisted in narrowing the issue to the question of the rival claims of Shelburne and Portland to the vacant post. It was impossible to place it on a ground more unfavourable to Fox. The constitutional right of the Sovereign to select the person who was to be entrusted with the task of forming his ministry was incontestable; and although in a united party some one leader is usually designated to his choice by an indisputable ascendency, no one could say that this was the position of Portland. Shelburne, who had been so long one of the most prominent statesmen in England, who had been a favourite colleague of Chatham, and who had very recently been offered the Treasury, had personal claims which were immeasurably higher. There was, indeed, something peculiarly ungraceful in the party which professed to be the special representative of the popular element in the Constitution putting forward for the second time as their indispensable leader a nobleman who was utterly destitute of parliamentary ability and reputation, and distinguished solely by a great title and a great fortune. Such a proceeding corroborated all that had been said of the narrow and oligarchical spirit of the old Whigs, of their desire to make the government of England the monopoly of a few great families. Shelburne had now the opportunity of employing a language which was equally pleasing to the nation and to the King. He said that he had imbibed the principles of 'his master in politics, the late Earl of Chatham,' who 'had always declared that this country ought not to be governed by any party or faction, and that if it were to be so governed the Constitution must necessarily expire;' and he added that 'he never would consent that the King of England should be a King of the Mahrattas, among whom it was a custom for a certain number of great lords to elect a Peshaw who was the creature of an

aristocracy, and was vested with the plenitude of power, while the King was in fact nothing more than a royal pageant or puppet.' 'These being his principles,' he continued, 'it was natural for him to stand up for the prerogative of the Crown, and to insist upon the King's right to appoint his own servants.' [1]

In the House of Commons, Fox denounced Shelburne as utterly untrustworthy, and accused him of having abandoned the principles on which the Government was formed, and of contemplating a restoration of the system which prevailed under North; but he was answered by Conway with great power. What principle, it was asked, which had been professed when the Government was framed, had been in fact abandoned? The ministers had pledged themselves to acknowledge the independence of America, and they had made this the very first article of their proposed treaty of peace, and it was Shelburne who had persuaded the King to consent to it. They had pledged themselves to recognise the legislative independence of Ireland, and they had done so. They had pledged themselves to put an end to the system of illegitimate influence in Parliament and the constituencies; and, as a means to this end, to remove contractors from Parliament, to disfranchise the revenue officers, and to carry a great measure of economical reform. All these measures they had actually accomplished. If there had been differences, they were mere differences of detail, such as must arise in every Cabinet. Fox suspected that Shelburne would revive the old system of royal government, but was it not at least his duty to delay his resignation till he had some proof that this suspicion was founded? Even in a time of profound peace a resignation based on such slight, vague, or problematical grounds, would be very

[1] *Parl. Hist.* xxiii. 192.

culpable. But what must be thought of a statesman, who, on these grounds, did his best to break up, or dislocate, a ministry which was engaged in the arduous task of negotiating a general peace at the end of a most disastrous war?

These arguments had great weight with the public, though the case of Fox was in reality much stronger than it appeared. The Rockingham Ministry had lasted only fifteen weeks, but on almost every question that arose there had been serious differences in the Cabinet, and these differences were not casual but systematic, the same men voting steadily together. Rightly or wrongly, Fox, and some of his colleagues, regarded Shelburne with the strongest possible dislike, suspicion, and distrust. They accused him of systematic duplicity and intrigue, of a constant wish to pursue his own policy without the knowledge or assent of his colleagues. Fox had already announced his determination to resign before the death of Rockingham. He had come to an open quarrel with Shelburne, and it was surely very undesirable that he should continue to serve under a minister with whom he was on such terms. Though he represented the more numerous section of the Whigs, the death of Rockingham, and the avowed determination of Lord J. Cavendish under no circumstances to continue in a ministry presided over by Shelburne, made it almost certain that Fox would be in a minority in the Cabinet, that he would be habitually outvoted, and that he would be expected to carry out a policy dictated by Shelburne. Was it for the advantage of the country that he should attempt under these conditions to carry on a most difficult and critical negotiation for peace, and that he should take the chief part in representing and defending the Government in the House of Commons?

It does not appear to me that such a position could have been tenable or honourable; but it would perhaps

have been wiser if Richmond or Fox himself had been proposed as leader. There were objections to them which did not apply to Portland, but they would have at least carried with them the weight of great influence and abilities. As it was, the resignation of Fox at once broke up the Rockingham party. Lord J. Cavendish was the only Cabinet minister who accompanied him in his resignation. Portland, Burke, Sheridan, Althorp, Duncannon, Townshend, the Solicitor-General Lee, and a few less important members of the party, took the same course ; but the Duke of Richmond, after a brief hesitation, determined to remain, and he from this time severed all political connection with Fox. Keppel also continued in the ministry, and many of the rank and file of the party transferred their allegiance to Shelburne. No difficulty was experienced in filling up the vacant places. By far the wisest, as well as the most popular, appointment was that of Pitt, who replaced Lord J. Cavendish as Chancellor of the Exchequer, and who thus early attained his ambition of entering the Cabinet. The secretaryship of the Home and Colonial departments, with the lead of the House of Commons, was given to Thomas Townshend, and that of Foreign Affairs to Lord Grantham, a former minister at Madrid Colonel Barré became Paymaster of the Forces ; Sir George Yonge, Secretary at War ; Dundas, Treasurer of the Navy ; Temple, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. On July 11, Parliament was prorogued, and it did not meet again till December.

The confidential letters of those who were best fitted to judge the position of Fox show much conflict of judgment and opinion. The King himself clearly saw that Shelburne and Fox could not long concur. Just before the death of Rockingham he wrote to Shelburne: 'From the language of Mr. Fitzpatrick it should seem that Lord Shelburne has no chance of being able to coalesce

with Mr. Fox. It may not be necessary to remove him at once; but if Lord Shelburne accepts the head of the Treasury and is succeeded by Mr. Pitt as Secretary for the Home Department and British Dominions, then it will be seen how far he will submit to it. The quarrelling with the rest of the party as a party would not be wise.'[1] Sir Gilbert Elliot wrote of the seceders: 'With the opinion they entertain of Lord Shelburne's character they could do no otherwise with dignity or credit.'[2] In the judgment of Sheridan there was 'really no other question but, whether having lost their power, they ought to stay and lose their characters.'[3] Fitzpatrick wrote: 'All persons who have any understanding and no office are of opinion that Charles has done right. All persons who have little understanding are frightened, and all persons who have offices, with some brilliant exceptions, think he has been hasty.'[4] 'My opinion,' wrote Lord Temple, 'from all whom I have seen, is that Fox has undone himself with the public; and his most intimate friends seem of the same opinion.'[5] Burke, on the other hand, was a strenuous advocate of resignation, and he looked upon the elevation of Shelburne as a crushing calamity, for it involved, in his judgment, a complete destruction of the system of united and independent administrations, which it had been the aim of Rockingham to construct.[6] Fox himself adopted a

[1] Fitzmaurice's *Life of Shelburne*, iii. 220.

[2] Lady Minto's *Life of Sir G. Elliot*, i. 80. It appears from a curious letter which Lady Minto has printed, that Adam Smith strongly approved of the resignation, but he said that he found himself in that respect alone in Edinburgh.—Ibid. p. 84.

[3] Buckingham *Papers*, i. 54.

[4] Fox's *Correspondence*, i. 461. See, too, p. 459.

[5] Buckingham *Papers*, i. 52.

[6] In a very remarkable and touching letter to Lord Loughborough, written just after Rockingham's death, Burke says: 'I have lost, and the public has lost a friend. But this was the hand of God manifestly, and according to the course and order of His providence. But to think that all the labours of his life

similar view. He told the Duke of Grafton, just before the death of Rockingham, that he was convinced that Shelburne was 'as fully devoted to the views of the Court as Lord North ever had been.'[1] I have done right,' he wrote to one of his most intimate friends immediately after his resignation, 'I am sure I have. The Duke of Richmond thinks very much otherwise, and will do wrong. I cannot help it. I am sure my staying would have been a means of deceiving the public and betraying my party, and these are things not to be done for the sake of any supposed temporary good. I feel that my situation in the country, my power, my popularity, my consequence, nay, my character, are all risked; but I have done right, and therefore in the end it must turn out to have been wise.'[2]

The main work of the Shelburne Ministry was the negotiation of peace, and this task had been rendered somewhat unexpectedly easy on account of a great change in the fortunes of the war. The surrender of Yorktown on October 19, 1781, had made the English cause in America a desperate one, though New York, Charleston, and Savannah were still held by English troops, and the long succession of other calamities that darkened the closing months of Lord North's Administration had

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and that all the labours of my life should, *in the very moment of their success*, produce nothing better than the delivery of the power of this kingdom into the hands of the Earl of Shelburne—the very thing, I am free to say to you and to everybody, the toils of a life ten times longer and ten times more important than mine would have been well employed to prevent—this, I confess, is a sore, a very sore trial. It really looks as if it were a call upon me at least, wholly to withdraw from all struggles in the political line.'—Campbell's *Chancellors*, viii. 63, 64.

[1] Grafton's *Autobiography*. The Duke of Grafton adds: 'In the sequel I was convinced of my error in thinking otherwise, but at that time I maintained Lord Shelburne's intentions to be pure and regardful to the public.'

[2] Buckingham *Papers*, i. 55.

reduced the English power to the lowest ebb. In the West Indies, as we have seen, Jamaica, Antigua, and Barbadoes alone remained under the British flag, and the capture of Jamaica by a combined French and Spanish force was the next great enterprise which the enemy proposed. In the beginning of April 1782, a powerful French fleet was collected at Martinique for that purpose. It consisted of thirty-three ships of the line and two ships of fifty guns, and it carried a large body of French troops, as well as great stores of guns and ammunition for the intended expedition.[1] Rodney, however, had arrived at Barbadoes on February 19 with twelve ships of the line. He soon after joined Hood at Antigua, and the arrival of some other English ships which had been sent out to St. Lucia made him for a time equal to the enemy. If a blow could be struck before the Spanish fleet arrived, Jamaica might yet be saved.

Rodney succeeded in his design, and a slight and indecisive action on April 9 was followed on the 12th by a great English victory near the island of Dominica. The rival forces were very equally matched. The English had three or four more ships than the French, and a slight superiority in the number of their guns, but the French had the greater weight of metal, and the greater number of men. They were commanded by De Grasse, and his flag flew on the 'Ville de Paris,' a noble ship carrying 110 guns, which had been presented to Lewis XV. by the town of Paris, and which was esteemed the flower of the whole French navy. The battle lasted for nearly eleven hours. Rodney succeeded in breaking the French line[2] in a manner which is said

[1] Beatson, v. 460.

[2] See Mundy's *Life of Rodney*, ii. 229, 230, 235. Beatson, however, maintained that the breaking of the French line was due to a change in the wind, and he somewhat depreciates the seamanship of Rodney (v. 470).

to have been imitated by Nelson, and in utterly routing the enemy. For some time the hostile guns almost touched, and the English fire was poured with a tremendous effect into the dense ranks of the French. The English did not lose a single ship, and their loss in killed and wounded was about 1,000 men. The French loss in killed and wounded is said to have amounted to 9,000 men. Six ships of the line and two smaller vessels were captured or sunk, and, as night drew in, the remainder fled in confusion. The sea was strewn with human bodies, and shoals of voracious sharks gathered around the sinking ships, and might be seen tearing the men from the fragments of wreck to which they clung. The 'Ville de Paris,' after an heroic resistance, was compelled to strike her flag. She was then little more than a wreck, and only three men—one of them being the admiral—were unwounded on her deck. The whole train of artillery, with the battering cannon and travelling carriages intended for the attack upon Jamaica, and a large treasure intended for the payment of the troops, fell into the hands of the English. The other French ships escaped, except four, which were soon after captured by Hood, but most of them were so disabled that their safety was probably entirely due to a sudden calm, which arrested the British pursuit.

No event could have been more mortifying to the enemy, and although the French ministers took a tone of haughty defiance, and gave immediate orders to build twelve new ships, it was at once felt that the conditions of the war were changed. England, if she could not be said to have regained her naval ascendency, had at least shattered that of France. The expedition against Jamaica, which had been so laboriously prepared, was at an end. The island, which was one of the chief prizes the enemy still hoped to win, was safe; and the depres-

sion which a long series of calamities had produced passed suddenly away.

'You have conquered,' said Lord North in Parliament, turning to the ministers, 'but you have conquered with the arms of Philip.' Rodney had owed his appointment to the ministry of North, and he had for some time been peculiarly obnoxious to the Rockingham Whigs. They had taken the lead in blaming—as it appears to me with only too good reason—the circumstances of the capture of St. Eustatius, and they attributed mainly to the dilatoriness of Rodney the successful arrival of De Grasse in the 'Chesapeake' which had led to the catastrophe of Yorktown. On May 1, just before the news of the great victory arrived in England, they had sent out Admiral Pigot to command the fleet, and had recalled Rodney, in a letter which was curt even to offensiveness, and without a single expression of regret or of regard. The news of the victory and of the recall came nearly at the same time, and the exultation of the public was largely mixed with indignation against the Government. The popularity of Rodney was at this time unbounded; and the title of baron, and a pension of 2,000*l.* a year which was granted him at the proposal of the Government, appeared to many an inadequate reward for his services.

For some months the war in other quarters was languid and indecisive. The Spanish governor of Cuba succeeded in driving the English from the Bahama isles, and a few small isolated forts or settlements were taken or retaken. Many prizes were captured on both sides. Some of the vessels taken by Rodney sank in a great storm; and the 'Royal George,' with Admiral Kempenfeldt and nearly one thousand sailors and marines, foundered in a sudden squall at Spithead. In the autumn of 1782, however, the curtain rose upon a far more stirring scene, upon the last great effort to capture Gibraltar.

The prospect of regaining that fortress had been one of the chief inducements of Spain to enter into the war, and France had pledged herself not to desist until it had been attained. Hitherto, General Elliot had baffled all the efforts of the two Powers; but it was now determined to make one more desperate attempt. The Duke de Crillon, who had just won a great reputation by the conquest of Minorca, was placed at the head of the Spanish army which was besieging the fortress, and preparations were made for a combined attack, by land and sea, on a scale which had probably been equalled in no modern siege. A distinguished French engineer named D'Arçon had discovered, as he imagined, the art of making battering-ships so strong that they would be wholly impervious to cannon-shot, while their sailors were completely protected against grape. With much care and labour, ten of these battering-ships were constructed, carrying 212 large guns. It was believed that this weight of metal, carried on invulnerable ships, must break down all resistance, and it was resolved to sustain the attack by the most powerful fleet the combined efforts of France and Spain could collect. Twelve thousand of the best French troops had just joined the Spanish army before Gibraltar, and the whole land forces collected before the fortress now amounted to near 40,000 men. The Count d'Artois the French King's brother, his cousin the Duke de Bourbon, many of the French and Spanish nobility, and many foreigners of distinction, were present, to witness or partake in the expected victory. Sir George Elliot, on the other hand, employed every means of strengthening his lines, and, at the suggestion of Sir Robert Boyd, he resolved to rely chiefly on red-hot balls. Immense numbers of grates and furnaces for heating shot were hastily constructed; and the garrison, now amounting to a little more than 7,000 men, awaited with the composure of

well-seasoned veterans the terrible ordeal that was before them.

On the morning of September 9 the new batteries of the enemy were unmasked, and during this and the two following days a tremendous cannonade was directed against the fortress from 170 cannon, all of large calibre, assisted by some ships of war and by a small fleet of gun and mortar boats. On the 12th the whole combined fleet of France and Spain anchored in the bay. No such armament had ever before been brought against a single fortress. There were no less than forty-seven ships of the line, accompanied by innumerable frigates, gunboats, mortar-boats, cutters, and smaller craft for disembarking men ; while in the midst of the fleet moved the ten great battering-ships which were the centre of so many hopes and fears, and which were destined, as it was believed, to begin a new era in the annals of war. And this great force was to co-operate with a land army of near 40,000 men, and to be sustained by land batteries which were now mounted with no less than 186 guns.

The spectacle was at once grand and terrible ; but as the garrison watched the approaching fleet, a sudden cheer burst from among them. A signal, it was said, was hoisted from the signal pole on the summit of the rock, and it could only mean that a British fleet was in sight. It was a delusive hope soon followed by disappointment, but the cause of the mistake seemed to many a happy omen. An eagle had hovered majestically over the British fortress, and, after wheeling for some moments through the air, had taken its stand on the signal post which crowned the height.

On the morning of the 13th the great attack began. The battering-ships, advancing before the other ships, sailed in admirable order to their appointed posts. The

nearest was only 900, the most remote 1,200 yards from the walls. For a long time the fire of the enemy was incessant, and the fortress, neglecting wholly that from the land batteries, replied with showers of shells and red-hot balls directed chiefly against the battering-ships, and hurled with admirable precision from ninety-six guns. No less than four hundred pieces of the heaviest artillery were firing together. For some hours the boast of the great French engineer seemed amply justified; and, though masts and rigging were torn away, the heaviest shot glanced harmlessly from the sides of the assailing vessels, which lay, apparently almost unscathed, under a fire which no other ships could have endured. But about two in the afternoon smoke was seen to issue from the Spanish admiral's ship. The fire was kept under for the rest of the day, but all attempts to extinguish it were vain. In the afternoon the enemy's fire perceptibly diminished; by seven or eight o'clock it was confined to the two most distant battering-ships, and numerous boats were seen to hasten to the others. The British fire continued incessant, and the red-hot balls plunged fiercely among the crews of the open boats. Shortly before midnight a wreck drifted in under the fort. An hour later flames burst out from the Spanish admiral's battering-ship, and soon after, a second vessel, commanded by the Prince of Nassau, was seen to be on fire. The splendour of the conflagration, which illumined the whole bay, enabled the English to continue their cannonade with a terrible precision, and between three and four in the morning six other battering-ships were in flames. At last, about three in the morning, a little squadron of twelve English gunboats, which had hitherto lain safely under the shelter of the new works, darted out under the command of Brigadier Curtis, swooped down upon the boats that were trying to withdraw the battering-ships, and put them easily to

flight. In the midst of the panic and confusion they met with no resistance, and as the morning of the 14th dawned the English devoted all their efforts to saving their now helpless enemies from the waves and from the burning ships. Three of the six battering-ships that were still in flames blew up; three others burnt to the water's edge, the crew having moistened the magazines before they abandoned them. The two remaining battering-ships were isolated and disabled, and it was hoped that they might be preserved as trophies of the memorable fight; but one of them unexpectedly burst into flames, and shortly after blew up, and the other it was found necessary to burn. The whole fleet of battering-ships which had been so laboriously constructed, and on which such boundless expectations had been placed, was thus destroyed. About 2,000 of the enemy were killed or captured in the attack, while the loss of the English in killed and wounded was only 90 men; and the invincible fortress, almost uninjured by the cannonade, still looked down defiantly on the foe.[1]

The mortification, both in France and Spain, was extreme. The dearest wish of the Spanish heart had seemed almost attained; and in France the interest was hardly less keen, and the confidence in the issue of the expedition was, if possible, even more complete. The capture of Gibraltar had been actually exhibited on the French stage. Gibraltar dresses and Gibraltar ornaments were prominent among the fashions of the hour, and the favourite toy in Paris was the Gibraltar fan, which on one side appeared strong and perfect as Gibraltar then was, but when turned on the other side fell at once into a disorderly heap, to represent what Gibraltar was soon to be.[2] All this confidence was now

[1] Drinkwater's *Siege of Gibraltar*. Beatson's *Naval and Military Memoirs*, vol. v.

[2] Grafton's *Autobiography*.

suddenly damped, and the last hopes of capturing the fortress were extinguished in October when Lord Howe, evading the combined fleets of France and Spain, succeeded in relieving it, and, having left it amply provided with all that was needed for a prolonged resistance, returned unmolested to England. Nothing more of any importance was done till the beginning of February 1783, when the Duke de Crillon sent a flag to inform General Elliot that the preliminaries of peace were signed. The siege had then lasted for three years seven months and twelve days.[1]

In America for some time the war had greatly languished. Immediately after the surrender of Yorktown Washington returned with his army to the vicinity of New York, but he felt himself far too weak to attempt its capture, and hostilities were restricted to a few indecisive skirmishes or predatory enterprises. It is curious to notice how far from sanguine Washington appeared even after the event which in the eyes of most men, outside America, had determined the contest without appeal. It was still impossible, he maintained, to do anything decisive unless the sea were commanded by a naval force hostile to England, and France alone could provide this force.[2] The difficulties of maintaining the army were unabated. 'All my accounts,' he wrote in April 1782, 'respecting the recruiting service are unfavourable; indeed, not a single recruit has arrived to my knowledge from any State except Rhode Island, in consequence of the requisitions of Congress in December last.'[3] He strongly urged the impossibility of recruiting the army by voluntary enlistment, and recommended that, in addition to the compulsory enrolment of Americans, German prisoners should be taken into the army.[4]

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[1] Drinkwater. Beatson.
[2] Washington's *Works*, viii. 201, 205.
[3] Ibid. p. 271.
[4] Ibid. pp. 255, 271.

Silas Deane, in private letters, expressed at this time his belief that it would be utterly impossible to maintain the American army for another year; and even after the surrender of Cornwallis, no less a person than Sir Henry Clinton assured the Government that, with a reinforcement of only 10,000 men, he would be responsible for the conquest of America.[1]

The condition of the finances was utterly ruinous. In July 1782, Robert Morris, who managed them with great ability, submitted to the Congress his budget for 1783. At least nine millions of dollars were necessary, and it was calculated that five millions might be imposed upon the States, and that the remainder must be raised by loan. It was also necessary to take some measure to secure the payment of the interest of the national debt, and as it had become quite clear that this could only be done by a revenue law which would operate through the whole Union, Congress asked power from the States to levy a duty of five per cent. on imports. But Rhode Island refused to consent; Massachusetts consented only after long hesitation, and its governor, Hancock, vetoed the Act; while Virginia, in language very like that which it had used against England at the time of the Stamp Act, denounced the idea of Congress levying taxes within its border as injurious to its sovereignty and likely to be destructive to its liberty.[2] The scheme, therefore, which was intended to be the main support of American credit, was abandoned, and at the same time the States showed the greatest possible reluctance to pay the quotas of the expense of the year which Congress had assigned to them. Of the five millions of dollars, 422,000 only could be collected. Delaware and the three most southern States gave nothing; Rhode

[1] Adolphus, iii. 394.

[2] Bancroft's *History of the United States*, x. 571, 572.

Island gave proportionately most, and it gave a little more than a sixth part of its quota. Credit was gone, and the troops had long been unpaid. 'The long sufferance of the army,' wrote Washington in October 1782, 'is almost exhausted. It is high time for peace.' [1]

Nothing, indeed, except the great influence, the admirable moderation and good sense, and the perfect integrity of Washington could have restrained the army from open revolt. The men who had borne the whole brunt and burden of the war, who had shown in many instances the most admirable patriotism and self-sacrifice, found themselves reduced to penury, and overwhelmed with debts, because the States evaded or neglected the obligations which were imposed on them, and the belief was very generally spread among them that as soon as the peace had made them no longer necessary, they would be cheated of what was due to them. Congress, after a long period of vacillation, had in October 1780 at length pledged itself by a resolution to give the American officers half-pay for life, and by this measure alone had prevented the army from disbanding. The pledge was binding upon the nation as the clearest and most sacred obligation of honour, but was it likely that it would be observed? It had been carried in spite of strong opposition. The New England patriots were fiercely hostile to half-pay as savouring of the abuses of a monarchy, and tending to establish a military caste. It was very doubtful—such at least was the opinion which the American officers had formed of their legislators—whether Congress would wish to fulfil its promise. It was equally doubtful whether it would be able to do so. Since the resolution had been carried, the Articles of Confederation, which required the concurrence of nine States to any Act appropriating public

[1] Bancroft's *History of the United States*, x. 573.

money, had been adopted, and nine States had never been in favour of the measure. The States had hitherto refused to establish any continental funds for the payment of the debt to the army. Under these circumstances, a feeling of deep suspicion and of bitter resentment had spread through the ranks, and especially among the officers, and it took forms that were very ominous. An extreme disgust at republican government was openly expressed, and it was clearly intimated to Washington that if he would accept a crown he might obtain it. Anonymous addresses, written with great ability, and known to represent the opinions of a large body of officers, were circulated in the army, recommending the officers to relinquish the service in a body if the war continued, or to retain their arms in case of peace if Congress refused to comply with their demands. It was with great difficulty, and by great management, that Washington could in some degree appease the storm, while the fact that he had himself refused all reward for his services gave him a special weight in pleading the cause of his soldiers. The promised half-pay was found to be so unpopular in several States that it would have been impossible to vote it, so it was agreed to commute it for a gross sum equal to five years' pay, and, in spite of a scream of indignation from New England, the requisite majority of the States were at last induced to secure that this should be paid at the end of the war.[1]

Holland, immediately after the surrender of Yorktown, had recognised the independence of America, which had as yet only been recognised by France. John Adams was received as representative at the Hague, and after several abortive efforts he succeeded in raising a

[1] Sparks' *Life* in Washington's *Works*, i. 385-392. See, too, viii. 398-406. Hildreth, iii. 427-433. Curtis, *History of the Constitution of the United States*, i. 159-170, 190-194.

Dutch loan. France, as her ablest ministers well knew, was drifting rapidly towards bankruptcy, yet two American loans, amounting together to 600,000*l.*, were extorted in the last year of the war. Up to the very eve of the formal signature of peace, and long after the virtual termination of the war, the Americans found it necessary to besiege the French Court for money. As late as December 5, 1782, Franklin wrote from Paris to Livingston complaining of the humiliating duty which was imposed upon him. 'It is in vain for me,' he wrote, 'to repeat again what I have so often written, and what I find taken so little notice of, that there are bounds to everything, and that the faculties of this nation are limited, like those of all other nations. Some of you seem to have established as maxims the suppositions that France has money enough for all her occasions and all ours besides.'[1]

The reply of Livingston was dated January 6, 1783, and it paints vividly the extreme distress in America. 'I see the force,' he writes, 'of your objections to soliciting the additional twelve millions, and I feel very sensibly the weight of our obligations to France, but every sentiment of this kind must give way to our necessities. It is not for the interest of our allies to lose the benefit of all they have done by refusing to make a small addition to it. . . . The army demand with importunity their arrears of pay. The treasury is empty, and no adequate means of filling it presents itself. The people pant for peace; should contributions be exacted, as they have hitherto been, at the point of the sword, the consequences may be more dreadful than is at present apprehended. I do not pretend to justify the negligence of the States in not providing greater supplies. Some of them might do more than they have

[1] American *Diplomatic Correspondence*, iv. 48.

done; none of them all that is required. It is my duty to confide to you, that if the war is continued in this country, it must be in a great measure at the expense of France. If peace is made, a loan will be absolutely necessary to enable us to discharge the army, that will not easily separate without pay.'[1]

It was evident that the time for peace had come. The predatory expeditions which still continued in America could only exasperate still further both nations, and there were some signs—especially in the conflicts between loyalists and revolutionists—that they were having this effect. England had declared herself ready to concede the independence America demanded. Georgia and South Carolina, where the English had found so many faithful friends, were abandoned in the latter half of 1782, and the whole force of the Crown was now concentrated at New York and in Canada. France and Spain for a time wished to protract negotiations in hopes that Rodney might be crushed, that Jamaica and afterwards Gibraltar might be captured; but all these hopes had successively vanished. It was true that the united navies of the two branches of the House of Bourbon still outnumbered the navy of England even without the assistance of the Dutch, and France was making strenuous efforts to repair the injury done to her navy by the victory of Rodney, but the dockyards of England were equally active. England in the last year had increased her navy, chiefly by capture, by no less than seventeen vessels, while France alone had suffered a diminution of thirteen ships of the line;[2] and the navy of England was flushed by a great victory, while the navy of France was depressed by a great defeat. If the war continued much longer America

[1] American *Diplomatic Correspondence*, iv. 62, 63.

[2] *Annual Register*, 1783, p. 157.

would almost certainly drop away, and France, and perhaps Spain, become bankrupt. After many disputes about forms, and some unnecessary delay, the terms of peace between England on the one hand, and America, France and Spain on the other, were settled, in the latter part of 1782. England was represented in the negotiation by Oswald and Fitzherbert; France by Vergennes; Spain by D'Aranda; America by Franklin, John Adams, and Jay. The provisional articles of peace between England and the United States were signed on November 30, 1782, and the preliminary articles with France and Spain on January 20, 1783. Peace with Holland was not yet concluded, but a truce was signed which put an end to the war.

Compared with the Peace of Paris, the new peace was necessarily a humiliating one, for the balance of losses in the war had been greatly against England. At the same time almost all that she relinquished to her European enemies had been taken from them in the late wars, and a considerable part of what had been gained by the Peace of Paris was still retained. By the treaty with France, that Power was guaranteed, with some slight modifications, the right to fish off Newfoundland, which had been acknowledged by the treaties of Utrecht and of Paris, and the little neighbouring islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon passed into her complete possession. In the West Indies, England restored St. Lucia and ceded Tobago, but she received back the important island of Dominica and the small islands of Grenada, St. Vincent, St. Christopher, Nevis, and Montserrat. In Africa, Senegal and Goree became French; while Fort James and the river Gambia remained English. In India the French regained their establishments in Orissa and Bengal, Pondicherry and Carical, the Fort of Mahé, and the commercial establishment of Surat, and they also acquired some considerable trade

privileges ; and finally, the humiliating article of the treaty of Utrecht which enjoined the demolition of the harbour and fortress of Dunkirk was abrogated.

All the efforts of Spain, by negotiation as well as by arms, to obtain Gibraltar were in vain, but Minorca was once more united to the Spanish crown. Spain retained West Florida, and England ceded to her East Florida. Spain, on the other hand, guaranteed the right of the English to cut logwood in Honduras Bay, and she restored Providence and the Bahama isles.

It was easy to exaggerate the importance of every concession made by England, and to contend that after the victory of Rodney and the virtual cessation of the American war it was unnecessary. Candid men will, however, remember how enormously England was outnumbered by her enemies, how doubtful even yet was her naval ascendency, how fatally it might have been affected by a single naval defeat, how crushing was the weight of the national debt, how numerous were the English possessions which were actually in the hands of the enemy. The points on which the Opposition especially dilated were the dangers to the Newfoundland fishery resulting from the right the French obtained of fortifying the islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon, the danger to England from the apprehended fortification of Dunkirk, the injury done to the English cotton manufacture by the cession of Tobago, and the absence of any provision guaranteeing liberty of worship and an undisturbed residence to the many loyal subjects of England in East Florida. On the whole, however, the treaties were probably as good as could be expected, and it is not likely that a continuance of the war would have ameliorated the position of England.

The treaty with the United States gave greater scope for adverse criticism. Parliament had indeed already simplified the question by its resolution in

favour of the complete recognition of the independence of the thirteen States, and the Americans soon abandoned their demands for the cession of Canada and Nova Scotia, and for compensation for private property destroyed in the course of the war. The question of boundaries, however, presented greater difficulty, and Shelburne determined, probably wisely, that he would if possible lay the foundation of future friendship by acting as liberally as possible in his concessions. The vast unsettled western country, inhabited chiefly by the Indians, which lay between the Alleghanies and the Mississippi was acknowledged to be part of the United States, England only retaining the right of free navigation of the Mississippi, which was made the western boundary of the United States, and divided its territory from that of Spain. This concession gave an immense field for the future development of the United States, while from its geographical position it was impossible that England could exercise any control in those quarters. The Canadian frontier had always been a matter of great doubt, but it was at last determined to abandon the boundary which had been settled by the Quebec Act in 1774, as well as that which England had endeavoured to assign to it in 1754, when it belonged to the French, and to take a new and intermediate boundary extending through the great lakes, and granting to the United States a large part of what the Quebec Act had reckoned as belonging to Canada and Nova Scotia. This territory contained only a very few scattered white men, but the Opposition complained bitterly that in the north as well as in the west several important forts, raised and maintained at English expense, were ceded without compensation; that a boundary line which approached within twenty-four miles of Montreal was inconsistent with the security of what remained of Canada; that the fur trade, which had hitherto been a monopoly of the Canadian

merchants, was at least divided with American merchants; and that no less than twenty-four tribes of Indians, who had been thoroughly loyal to the British Crown, were handed over, without the smallest stipulation in their favour, to the American rule. The Americans had liberty to fish on all the banks of Newfoundland and in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, but they were not permitted to dry or cure fish on the island of Newfoundland. It was noticed that there was no corresponding authorisation for British subjects to fish on American coasts.

There were two other points which excited great difficulty. England demanded that the private debts incurred by American citizens to English citizens before 1775 should be recognised as binding. This was indeed a question of the simplest honesty, and there were considerable old debts outstanding, chiefly to Glasgow merchants, which, when the troubles began, the Americans had been unwilling or unable to pay. Franklin strenuously opposed the demand, ingeniously alleging that much of the merchandise from the sale of which these debts ought to have been paid had been destroyed by English soldiers during the war. John Adams, however, whose sense of honour was much higher than that of his colleague, fully admitted the justice of the English claim, and declared 'that he had no notion of cheating anybody,' that 'the question of paying debts and compensating Tories were two.'[1] The dispute was ultimately settled by a general clause stating 'that creditors on either side shall meet with no lawful impediment to the recovery of the full value in sterling money of all *bonâ fide* debts heretofore contracted.'

The other question at issue was one in which the honour of England was deeply concerned. It was that

[1] Fitzmaurice's *Life of Shelburne*, iii. 293.

those who had taken arms for the Crown should be restored to their country and their rights, and should regain the estates that had been confiscated, or at least obtain an equivalent for their loss. On these points, however, the American plenipotentiaries were obdurate. All that could be obtained was an engagement that there should be no future confiscations or prosecutions on account of the part taken in the war; that Congress would 'earnestly recommend it to the legislatures of the respective States' to restore the confiscated estates of real British subjects, and of Americans who had not actually taken arms for the British; that Congress would also earnestly recommend that loyalists who had taken arms should receive back their estates on refunding the money which had been paid for them, and that such persons should have liberty to remain for twelve months in the United States 'unmolested in their endeavours' to obtain the restitution of their confiscated estates and rights.

Perhaps the most remarkable fact in the negotiation which led to the American peace was that in its latter stages the parties most seriously opposed to one another were not the English and Americans, but the Americans and the French. Franklin, it is true, always leaned to the French side, and showed much gratitude to France and some animosity to England; but John Adams had long disliked and distrusted Vergennes,[1] and Jay, who had at one time been an ardent advocate of the French alliance, changed into the most violent hostility. 'He thinks,' wrote Franklin, 'the French minister one of the greatest enemies of our country; that he would have straitened our boundaries to prevent the growth of our people, contracted our fishery to obstruct the increase of our seamen, and retained the royalists among us to

[1] See Adams' Life. *Works*, i. 320, 321.

keep us divided; that he privately opposes all our negotiations with foreign Courts, and afforded us during the war the assistance we received, only to keep it alive that we might be so much the more weakened by it; that to think of gratitude to France is the greatest of follies, and that to be influenced by it would ruin us. He makes no secret of his having these opinions, and expresses them publicly, sometimes in presence of the English ministers.'[1]

Considering all that France had done for America, such language sounds very strange, but it is not difficult to explain it. While the French minister had never wavered in his determination to secure the independence of the old English colonies in America, he had, as we have seen, uniformly discouraged all attempts to annex Canada to them, and he aimed at the establishment of a balance of power in America in which neither England nor the United States should have a complete ascendency. In accordance with the same policy he contended that the country of the great lakes was incontestably either a dependency of Canada or the property of Indians, and that the United States had no title to it. In October 1782 Vergennes expressed these views in a secret despatch to the French envoy in America; he added, with some bitterness, that once the French ceased to subsidise the American army it would be 'as useless as it has been habitually inactive,' and he expressed his astonishment at the new demand for money, while the Americans obstinately refused the payment of taxes. 'It seems to be much more natural,' he wrote, 'for them to raise upon themselves, rather than upon the subjects of the King, the funds which the defence of their cause exacts.'[2] A month later he intimated to

[1] American *Diplomatic Correspondence*, iv. 138.

[2] Bancroft's *History of the United States*, x. 582.

the French ambassador at Madrid his determination not to continue the war on account of the ambitious pretensions of the Americans, either with reference to the fisheries or to their boundaries.[1] France had herself an interest in the Newfoundland fishery, and the French agents strongly denied the right of the Americans to an unrestricted participation in it. The fishery of the broad sea, they said, is by natural law open to all; coast fisheries, apart from express treaty provisions, belong exclusively to the sovereigns of the coast; and the Americans, in ceasing to be British subjects, had lost all right to fish upon an English coast.[2]

The Americans soon discovered that on these two important questions the influence of France was hostile to them, and on the question of the Mississippi boundary the same opposition appeared. The country bounded on the north by Canada, on the south by part of Florida, on the west by the Mississippi, and on the east by the Alleghany Mountains, fringed the whole length of the United States; and although it had not yet been appropriated or divided into States, it was the great field in which the ultimate expansion of the English race might be anticipated. According to the Spaniards the boundaries of Florida extended far into this country, but England had never acknowledged the claim. In the proclamation of 1763 the country was recognised as Indian territory external to the English establishments.[3] Vergennes agreed with Spain that the United States were nowhere in contact with the Mississippi. The northern portion of the disputed territory, as far down as the Ohio, he thought should be considered part of

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[1] Bancroft's *History of the United States*, x. 588.

[2] Circourt, ii. 243.

[3] See the memorial of Rayneval on the subject. American *Diplomatic Correspondence*, viii. 156–160.

Canada, in accordance with the boundary defined by the Quebec Act. The southern portion, in accordance with the proclamation of 1763, he wished to be considered Indian territory, under the joint protectorate of Spain and the United States.

The question was one which had been for some time pending. In 1779, Congress had put forward an ultimatum for peace, in which they claimed the Mississippi for their western boundary. In 1780, however, when the question of a Spanish alliance was raised, the French envoy had strongly represented that the States had no right whatever to this western territory or to the navigation of the river; that the Spanish conquests would probably spread over this country, and that an abandonment of the claim to the Mississippi boundary was indispensable if Spain was to be induced to co-operate in the war. Congress listened to the advice, and silently dropped the claim, making a simple acknowledgment of the independence of the States the sole condition of peace.[1] The claim, however, to the Mississippi boundary was now revived, and as it was a matter of little or no importance to England, it produced the curious spectacle of a kind of alliance between the English and American diplomatists in opposition to those of France and Spain.

The motives of the French ministers appear to have been twofold. They were consistently jealous of the too great expansion of the new State, and they were anxious to assist their allies the Spaniards. France had found herself unable to fulfil her pledge of recovering Gibraltar by arms; she had failed in her attempts to induce England to cede it in exchange for Oran, or West Florida and the Bahama islands, or Guadeloupe, and she had equally failed in her intention of restoring Jamaica to Spain. Under these circumstances, Ver-

[1] Fitzmaurice's *Life of Shelburne*, iii. 169–173.

gennes would gladly have compensated Spain by giving her the power of extending her dominion through the unoccupied territory to the west of the inhabited part of the United States, and by securing to her the sole navigation of the Mississippi.

The antagonism on these points was very keen. Oswald placed in the hands of Jay a despatch from Marbois, the secretary of the French legation at Philadelphia, which had been intercepted by the English, and which showed an extreme hostility to the claims which Samuel Adams and a large party in New England were putting forward to participate in the fisheries.[1] Vergennes sent his favourite secretary Rayneval with profound secrecy to London to communicate with Shelburne. Jay heard of it, and at once despatched a secret messenger of his own to counteract the negotiation. Oswald appears to have told Jay very strange stories of intimations that French ministers were said to have given in 1780 and 1782, to influential Englishmen, of their willingness to terminate the contest by dividing the American colonies between France and England,[2] and the Americans were quite aware that the French were opposing their claims to the fisheries and to the extended boundaries. On the Mississippi question the parts were so curiously inverted that Jay strongly maintained in opposition to Spain the right of the English to a free navigation on that river, and he even urged that England should retain West Florida for herself, instead of ceding it to Spain.[3] England, on the other hand, with some restrictions which were easily compromised, was ready to meet the American demands. The United States obtained a much greater extension to the north

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[1] See this letter in Jay's *Life*, by his son, i. 490–494.

[2] Ibid. pp. 156–159.

[3] Fitzmaurice's *Life of Shelburne*, iii. 272.

and to the west, and a much greater share in the Newfoundland fishery than the French considered they had a right to, and the alliance between France and America was seriously impaired.

In June 1781, Congress had, perhaps imprudently, consented, at the wish of the French ministers, to bind their commissioners by instructions which placed the whole control of the negotiations for peace in the hands of the French. The recognition of independence was alone made indispensable. For the rest the language of the instructions was as explicit as possible: 'You are to make the most candid and confidential communications upon all subjects to the ministers of our generous ally the King of France; to undertake nothing in the negotiations for peace or truce without their knowledge and concurrence, and ultimately to govern yourself by their advice and opinion.'[1] No words could more distinctly pledge the American commissioners to France. But in spite of them, Vergennes complained that on the very eve of the peace he could obtain only the vaguest and most unsatisfactory answers about the proceedings of the American negotiators, and those negotiators at last signed the preliminary articles without his knowledge. 'As we had reason,' they wrote to Livingston when announcing this step, 'to imagine that the articles respecting the boundaries, the refugees, and fisheries did not correspond with the policy of this court, we did not communicate the preliminaries to the minister until they were signed.'[2]

They were communicated immediately after, with the exception of one article, which was kept separate and secret, defining the northern boundary of West Florida if that province were retained by Spain. Ver-

[1] Trescot's *Diplomacy of the Revolution*, p. 110. See Franklin's *Works*, ix. 458.

[2] American *Diplomatic Correspondence*, x. 120.

gennes complained bitterly that the commissioners, in signing the articles without the knowledge of the French ministers, without even informing themselves of the state of the negotiations between France and England, had been guilty of a gross breach of faith and of gross ingratitude. John Adams, he added, on his return from Holland to take part in the negotiations, had passed nearly three weeks in Paris without the ordinary attention and courtesy of calling on him. In a confidential and very remarkable despatch he directed Luzerne, who was French minister in America, to inform the chief members of the Congress of the conduct of the American commissioners, and he complained of the difficulties which it threw upon France, which had to attend not only to her own interests, but also to those of Spain and Holland. The French negotiation with England, he said, was still by no means terminated, 'not that the King, if he had shown as little delicacy in his proceedings as the American commissioners, might not have signed articles with England long before them.' 'I accuse no person,' he concluded; 'I blame no one, not even Dr. Franklin. He has yielded too easily to the bias of his colleagues, who do not pretend to recognise the rules of courtesy in regard to us. All their attentions have been taken up by the English whom they have met in Paris. If we may judge of the future from what has passed here under our eyes, we shall be but poorly paid for all that we have done for the United States and for securing to them a national existence. I will add nothing in respect to the demand for money which has been made upon us; you may well judge if conduct like this encourages us to make demonstrations of our liberality.' [1]

[1] The letters of Vergennes to Franklin and to Luzerne are printed in the American *Diplomatic Correspondence*, and also in Franklin's *Works*, ix. 449, 450, 452–456.

Franklin, who was most anxious to retain both for his country and for himself the good opinion of France, answered the remonstrance of Vergennes in a very apologetical strain. He admitted that the commissioners had 'been guilty of neglecting a point of *bienséance*;' but he urged that 'nothing had been agreed to in the preliminaries contrary to the interests of France,' that the articles were merely provisional, and that no peace could take place between America and England till peace had also been made between France and England. He expressed the most lively gratitude to the French king, and his hope 'that the great work, which has hitherto been so happily conducted, is so nearly brought to perfection, and is so glorious to his reign, will not be ruined by a single indiscretion of ours. And certainly,' he added, 'the whole edifice sinks to the ground immediately, if you refuse on that account to give us any further assistance.'[1]

This hope was fulfilled. France had already resolved to grant America a new loan, though her own finances were strained almost to the uttermost. She did not allow the conduct of the Americans to alter her determination, and a few days after the correspondence I have quoted, six millions of livres were granted. At the same time Vergennes wrote very earnestly to Luzerne urging him to impress upon Congress that it was by no means certain that peace had as yet been finally attained.[2] It was plain that Shelburne's Ministry would not last, and there was much reason to fear that Fox if he came to power would be disposed to continue the war with France provided he could make peace with America. The fear that had long haunted Vergennes, that America might be detached from the alliance, and that the whole power of England might

[1] Franklin's *Works*, ix. 451. [2] Ibid. pp. 456, 457.

be employed in a prolonged war against her European adversaries, was not even yet entirely dispelled.[1]

It suited the purpose of Franklin to represent the conduct of the commissioners in signing the preliminary articles without the knowledge of the French ministers as a simple failure of courtesy, the omission of a diplomatic formality which ought to have been observed, but which was of no practical importance. It is obvious that this view was not the true one, and it is equally obvious from the letters of the commissioners to their own Government that they were perfectly aware of the real importance of what they had done. Two of the commissioners had conceived a profound distrust of the French Minister.[2] They believed that Rayneval had been sent to England to retard or prevent the recognition of American independence, that the French Ministers desired to keep America in permanent and humiliating dependence, and that they were acting falsely and treacherously towards her. For the charge of treachery there was no foundation. The independence of the Americans had been the steady aim of France; she was not in the least disposed to abandon it, and although Vergennes desired to increase the in-

[1] See a remarkable letter of Montmorin to Vergennes detailing his argument with the Spanish Minister (March 30, 1782).—Circourt, iii. 326–328.

[2] Jay's views on the subject are very fully put forward in a long letter to Livingston (American *Diplomatic Correspondence*, viii. 129–208), and the similar views of Adams are expressed in several letters in the same collection. Both Jay and Adams have found powerful defenders in their descendants and biographers. See the *Life of Jay*, by his son, and the *Life of Adams*, by his grandson. With these should be compared the commentary of Mr. Sparks, American *Diplomatic Correspondence*, viii. 208, 212. See, too, among more recent works, the Appendix to the third volume of the *Digest of International Law*, by F. Wharton (Washington, 1887), and an Address on the Peace Negotiations of 1782–1783 before the New York Historical Society by John Jay, printed with copious illustrations in 1884.

fluence of his own country by a balance of power in America, he does not appear to have opposed American interests on any point on which he had ever promised to support them. France was, however, endeavouring, as the principal member of a great coalition, to make peace, and she was seeking to reconcile many conflicting interests and to satisfy many conflicting claims. It is undoubtedly true that she desired that America should make a serious sacrifice of her prospects for the benefit of the other belligerents, and especially of Spain.

The publication of the diplomatic correspondence of Vergennes shows that his relations with the Spanish Government were at this time very embarrassing. Florida Blanca, who directed Spanish politics, looked upon American independence with scarcely concealed detestation. He clearly saw the danger of the precedent to all colonial Powers, and there were already serious disturbances in several parts of Spanish America.[1] The failure of nearly all the special objects of Spanish ambition had greatly irritated him, and after the defeat of the attack upon Gibraltar he was betrayed into some very ungenerous and unwarrantable insinuations directed against the French soldiers who had taken part in the siege.[2] Vergennes showed some natural resentment, but he had no wish to throw away the Spanish alliance, and every wish to gratify his ally. If his policy had been carried out it seems clear that he would have established a claim for concessions from England by supporting her against America on the questions of Canada and the Canadian border and the Newfoundland fishery, and that he would have partially compensated Spain for her failure before Gibraltar by obtaining for her a complete ascendency upon the Mississippi. The

[1] See the letters of Vergennes to Montmorin.—Circourt, iii. 319, 320, 323–328.

[2] Ibid. pp. 329, 330.

success of such a policy would have been extremely displeasing to the Congress, and Jay and Adams defeated it. Franklin very reluctantly acquiesced in the secret signature. Livingston, writing from America, strongly blamed it, and expressed his conviction that the suspicions of the commissioners were unfounded. But the act was done, and if it can be justified by success, that justification at least is not wanting.

The separate signature appears to have had one important effect upon European affairs. The cession of Gibraltar to the Spaniards had for some time been seriously considered in the Cabinet, and Shelburne himself was disposed to agree to it. After a long deliberation the Cabinet had actually resolved to exchange Gibraltar for Guadaloupe, when the news of the accomplished peace with America induced them to reconsider their determination.[1]

It is impossible not to be struck with the skill, hardihood, and good fortune that marked the American negotiation. Everything the United States could with any shadow of plausibility demand from England they obtained, and much of what they obtained was granted them in opposition to the two great Powers by whose assistance they had triumphed. The conquests of France were much more than counterbalanced by the financial ruin which impelled her with giant steps to revolution. The acquisition of Minorca and Florida by Spain was dearly purchased by the establishment of an example which before long deprived her of her own colonies. Holland received an almost fatal blow by the losses she incurred during the war. England emerged from the struggle with a diminished empire and a vastly augmented

[1] Fitzmaurice's *Life of Shelburne*, iii. 305, 306, 314. Lord Edmond Fitzmaurice's book contains, I think, the best and fullest extant account of the negotiations that led to the peace of 1783.

debt, and her ablest statesmen believed and said that the days of her greatness were over. But America, though she had been reduced by the war to almost the lowest stage of impoverishment and impotence, gained at the peace almost everything that she desired, and started with every promise of future greatness upon the mighty career that was before her.

The part of the treaty with England which excited most severe criticism was the abandonment of the loyalists. These unfortunate men had, indeed, a claim of the very strongest kind to the protection of England, for they had lost everything in her cause. Some had simply fled from the country before mob violence, and had been attainted in their absence. Others had actually taken up arms, and they had done so at the express invitation of the English Government and of English generals. Their abandonment was described by nearly all the members of the Opposition as an act of unqualified baseness which would leave an enduring stain on the English name. 'What,' said Lord North, 'are not the claims of those who, in conformity to their allegiance, their cheerful obedience to the voice of Parliament, their confidence in the proclamation of our generals, invited under every assurance of military, parliamentary, political, and affectionate protection, espoused with the hazard of their lives, and the forfeiture of their properties, the cause of Great Britain?'[1] It had hitherto nearly always been the custom to close a struggle, which partook largely of the nature of civil war, by a generous act of amnesty and restitution. At the Peace of Münster a general act of indemnity had been passed, and the partisans of the Spanish sovereign had either regained their confiscated properties, or had been indemnified for their loss. A similar measure had

[1] *Parl. Hist.* xxiii. 452.

been exacted in favour of the revolted Catalans by France at the Peace of the Pyrenees, and by England at the Peace of Utrecht, and Spain had frankly conceded it. The case of the American loyalists was a still stronger one, and the Opposition emphatically maintained that the omission of any effectual provision for them in the Treaty of Versailles, 'unless marked by the just indignation of Parliament, would blast for ever the honour of this country.'[1]

This charge does not appear to me to be a just one. It is evident from the correspondence which has now been published that Shelburne from the very beginning of the negotiation did all that was in his power to obtain the restoration of the loyalists to their civil rights and to their properties. He directed Oswald to make their claims an article of the first importance. He repeatedly threatened to break off the whole negotiation if it were not conceded, and he suggested more than one way in which it might be accomplished. Savannah and Charleston had, indeed, been evacuated; but New York was in the hands of the English till the peace, and they might reasonably ask for a compensation to the loyalists as the price of its surrender. A vast amount of territory to the south of Canada, and to the east of the Mississippi, had been conceded to the United States to which they had very little claim, and it was proposed by the English that lands in the uninhabited country should be sold, and that a fund should be formed to compensate the loyalists. Vergennes strenuously supported Shelburne, and urged, as a matter of justice and humanity, that the Americans should grant an amnesty and a restoration. As far as can now be judged, his motives appear to have been those of a humane and honourable man. He knew that the loyalists represented

[1] *Annual Register*, 1783, p. 164.

the real opinions of a very large section of the American people, and that he was himself mainly responsible for their ruin. If France had not drawn the sword, there is little doubt that they would still have been the leading class in America. The intervention, however, of Vergennes was attributed by Jay and Adams to the most malevolent and Machiavellian motives,[1] and the time had passed when a French minister could greatly influence American councils. The commissioners took their stand upon the constitutional ground that Congress had no power to grant what was demanded, for the loyalists had been attainted by particular Acts of particular State legislatures, and it was only these legislatures that could restore them. That there was no disposition in America to do so they honestly admitted. Franklin, whose own son was a distinguished and very honourable loyalist, was conspicuous for his vindictiveness against the class, and he even tried to persuade the English negotiators that the loyalists had no claim upon England, for their misrepresentations had led her to prolong the war.[2] The loyalist question was one of those on which the three commissioners were cordially united, and there is no doubt that they represented the dominant party in America.

Under these circumstances it was necessary to yield. It would, no doubt, have been possible to have continued the war solely upon this ground; but a year of hostilities would cost much more than would have been required as compensation, and it would have inflamed the American hatred of the loyalists to madness. Once the independence of America was recognised, it was not in the power of England to provide that they should live

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[1] See American *Diplomatic Correspondence*, vi. 453 457; viii. 207. Sabine's *American Loyalists*, 94–97.

[2] Franklin's *Works*, ix. 315.

securely among a hostile population and under a hostile Government. The Americans clearly saw that England could not enforce the claims of the loyalists, and they therefore persisted in resisting them. Congress directed the commissioners to enter into no engagement respecting loyalists unless Great Britain promised compensation for losses caused to private persons by persons in her service during the war. The recommendation it ultimately made, in accordance with the terms of the treaty, to the State legislatures in favour of the loyalists was probably always intended to be a dead letter. The Legislature of South Carolina took some honourable and generous steps to heal the breach;[1] but in general popular feeling showed itself after the peace in the highest degree rancorous towards all who were suspected of Tory opinions. The loyalists whose properties had been confiscated, or who had been banished by acts of attainder, formed but a small proportion of the known sympathisers with the old Government. Mob violence, however, and many forms of injustice, made life almost intolerable for them in their homes, and emigration to British territory took place on a scale which had been hardly paralleled since the Huguenots. It has been estimated, apparently on good authority, that in the two provinces of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick alone, the loyalist emigrants and their families amounted to not less than 35,000 persons, and that the total number of refugees cannot have been much less than 100,000.[2]

Many reasons conspired to strengthen the determination of the Americans to resist all demands in favour of

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[1] Sabine's *American Loyalists*, pp. 86, 87.

[2] Jones's *History of New York*, ii. 259–268, 500–509. The estimate of the number of emigrants who took refuge in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick is made by Mr. de Lancey, the editor of Judge Jones's *Life*, from a careful examination of the records at Halifax.

the loyalists. The civil war between Whigs and Tories had, as we have seen, been much more savage than the war between the English and the Americans; and the revolutionary party attributed with some reason the long continuance of the struggle to the existence and to the representations of the great loyalist party in America. The power of Congress was still extremely uncertain; there was much difficulty in inducing the States to obey its mandates, and the restoration of the most active and enterprising leaders of the party disaffected to the new state of things might be very dangerous. The country was exhausted and impoverished and in no mood to pay anything, and strong personal and class interests were hostile to a restoration. The loyalists to a great extent sprang from and represented the old gentry of the country. The prospect of seizing their property had been one great motive which induced many to enter into the war. The owners of the confiscated property now grasped the helm. New men exercised the social influence of the old families, and they naturally dreaded the restoration of those whom they had displaced.

It remained for England to discharge her obligations to her exiled partisans. In 1782 and for some years later, regular annuities amounting to a little more than 40,000*l.* a year were granted as compensation to loyalists, but this sum was distributed among only 315 persons. Additional sums, amounting to between 17,000*l.* and 18,000*l.* a year, were granted occasionally, and for particular or occasional losses,[1] and it was agreed that officers who had served as volunteers in provincial regiments in America should receive half-pay.[2] When it had become clear that the States would not listen to the

[1] Wilmot's *Historical View of the Commission for Enquiring into the Losses and Claims of the Loyalists*, pp. 15, 16. Sabine's *American Loyalists*, pp. 70, 71.

[2] *Parl. Hist.* xxiii. 1050–1058.

recommendation of Congress to restore the loyalists to their estates, an Act was carried authorising the appointment of commissioners to inquire into the circumstances and former fortunes of persons who were reduced to distress by the American troubles. The inquiry dragged on slowly for several years. Miserable stories were told of hearts and minds that broke under the prolonged suspense, of once affluent loyalists who were driven to suicide and insanity, or were languishing in a debtor's gaol. In 1788 the subject was again discussed in Parliament, and in 1790 it was brought to a conclusion. The claimants in England, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Canada were 5,072, of whom 954 either withdrew or failed to establish their claims. Among the remainder about 3,110,000*l.* was distributed. When it is added that many had received annuities, half-pay as military officers, grants of land from the Crown and special favours in the distribution of ordinary patronage, it will not, I think, appear that England showed herself ungrateful to her friends.[1]

The peace was, on the whole, unpopular in the country, and the Cabinet which made it seemed withering away. This was partly due to differences about its terms, but partly also to the unfortunate peculiarities of Shelburne, who still retained all his old power of alienating his colleagues. They complained of his arrogance and of his reticence; of his desire to monopolise authority and take important steps without consulting them. In January 1783 Richmond spoke to the King of Shelburne's 'assumption of too much power,' and declared that he would go no more to the Council, though he would remain in office to carry out the reforms of the Ordnance. Next day Keppel resigned, alleging his disapproval of

[1] Sabine, pp. 107–112.

the peace. About ten days later Lord Carlisle, who was Lord Steward, took the same step ostensibly on the ground of the desertion of the loyalists. The Duke of Grafton and Lord Camden had remained in the Government, when Fox seceded, chiefly because they considered themselves bound in honour to do so, as Shelburne at the time of the formation of the second Rockingham Ministry had at their request waived his claims to the Treasury. Camden, however, had only undertaken to remain in office for three months, and the letters that passed between him and Grafton show that both statesmen soon felt a profound distrust of their chief. They complained of his 'want of openness,' of his systematic withholding of confidence; and a few days after the resignation of Lord Carlisle, when the Duke of Rutland was introduced into the Cabinet without any previous information having been given by Shelburne to his colleagues, Grafton resigned the Privy Seal. 'Lord Shelburne's language,' he wrote, 'thoroughly convinced me that he expected to be the sole adviser to the King of measures of this sort,' and he spoke of his determination not to abet Shelburne in his views of becoming Prime Minister, and of his resolve to 'consider him but as holding the principal office in the Cabinet.' Camden disapproved of the resignation of Grafton, but he himself told Shelburne that he must claim his right of retiring after three months, and he was sometimes very doubtful whether he would remain so long. Conway was restive and discontented, and constantly talked of breaking with Shelburne.[1] Pitt, indeed, stood faithfully by him, and eulogised him eloquently in Parliament; but the sequel showed how little he liked him as a

[1] The fullest account of these divisions is in the Duke of Grafton's *Autobiography* See, too, Fitzmaurice's *Life of Shelburne*, iii. 327–359. Fox's *Correspondence*, ii. 10–18.

leader or a colleague, and he is reported afterwards to have said that whatever sins he might have committed in his ministerial capacity, he had atoned for them in advance by serving for nearly a year under Lord Shelburne.[1]

All these things pointed clearly to the speedy resignation of Shelburne. On the very morning of the day on which Grafton resigned, Camden strongly advised Shelburne to retire, on the ground that it 'unfortunately plainly appeared that the personal dislike was too strong for him to attempt to stem it.' A few days later Grafton learnt, 'from the best authority, that Mr. Pitt was desired to go from many of the most independent and respectable members of the House of Commons to advise, and even press Lord Shelburne to withdraw.'[2] Shelburne himself was very discontented with his position. He was much disposed to resign, but he determined at last, after some hesitation, that he would wait, as he had an undoubted right to do, for a decisive vote of the House of Commons. He was convinced, with some reason, that the peace was as good as the conditions of the war authorised; he had not in reality given up any principle he had professed, and while he was continually represented as the passive instrument of the King, he was himself full of suspicions, which appear to have been entirely unfounded, that the King was plotting against him and undermining his position. Situated as parties were, it was plain that Shelburne could not remain in office without a coalition, unless his party gave him the most ardent and self-sacrificing support, and, as Lord Loughborough a few months earlier had written, 'the Minister for whose immediate advantage they are to make such an exertion is a man neither liked nor respected, and to whom even interest could

[1] Russell's *Life of Fox*, i. 326. [2] Grafton's *Autobiography*.

not easily reconcile the greater part of them.'[1] If Fox in the next few weeks had acted with common wisdom, it is probable that the Whig party would have speedily regained its unity and its ascendency.

It was obviously necessary to seek new allies and a new disposition of parties. According to a calculation reported by Gibbon, the Government could at this time count in the House of Commons upon 140 votes, Lord North upon 120, and Fox upon 90, the other votes being uncertain.[2] A combination of any two parties would, therefore, outnumber the third. The natural affinity of the Government party was with the separated Whigs, and Pitt accordingly had an interview with Fox to induce him to join the Government. Fox immediately asked whether Shelburne was to remain at the head, and being answered in the affirmative, he declared that he would never serve in a Government presided over by that statesman. Pitt rejoined that he had not come to betray Lord Shelburne, and abruptly closed the interview. Attempts were then made to strengthen the Government by negotiations with followers of North, but without introducing North himself. The discussion of the preliminaries of peace in Parliament was fast approaching, and it remained to be seen what course the two sections of the Opposition would pursue.

The question was soon answered in a manner that at once astonished and scandalised the country. Fox and North were found to have made a coalition against the Government, and a coalition which was not confined to the single object of censuring the peace, but was intended to be a permanent alliance with a view to a future administration. In order to realise the full force

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[1] Auckland *Correspondence*, i. 7.

[2] Gibbon's *Miscellaneous Works*, iii. 262.

of the impression which was made by this event, it is necessary to remember that during the whole course of the American war the chief interest of English parliamentary politics had lain in the furious attacks which Fox had made upon North, and that those attacks had been of such a nature that many considered it a shameful instance of tergiversation that he had not, on arriving at power, insisted on bringing his predecessor to a public trial. In one speech he had spoken of his 'unexampled treachery and falsehood.' In another he charged him with 'public perfidy and a breach of a solemn specific promise.' In a third he expressed his hope that the ministers who made the American war would, 'through the indignation and vengeance of an injured and undone people,' be brought to expiate their crimes upon the scaffold. In 1778, when Lord Nugent spoke of the harmony with which all parties would support the Government against the foreign enemy, Fox repudiated the notion with indignation. 'What,' he said, 'enter into an alliance with those very ministers who had betrayed their country, who had been prodigal of the public strength, the public wealth, and, what was still more valuable, the glory of the nation! The idea was too monstrous to be admitted for a moment. Did the noble lord think it possible that he would ally himself with those ministers who had led us on from one degree of wretchedness to another . . . who had lost America, ruined Ireland, thrown Scotland into tumult, and put the very existence of Great Britain to the hazard?'[1] As late as the formation of Shelburne's Ministry he had denounced it as likely to bring back to office the ministers who made the American war. 'The principles of the late ministry,' he said, 'were now in the Cabinet,

[1] Russell's *Life of Fox*, i. 80, 81, 210-212, 258, 259.

and the next thing he should look for would be to see the late ministers themselves again in office.'[1]

The sudden change from this language of intense animosity to a close alliance shocked and scandalised the country and ultimately ruined the Whig party. The project had been for some time in contemplation, and the two men who appear to have first devised it were Loughborough and Eden. As early as July 1782 they agreed that the Shelburne Ministry could not possibly last, that the antipathy between Fox and Shelburne was too serious for reconciliation, and that the only way in which a strong and permanent administration could be formed was by uniting Fox and North.[2] Both Eden and Loughborough detested Shelburne, and the first frankly admitted that he was indignant because no offer had been made to him,[3] while the latter was probably largely influenced by a desire to supplant his old rival Thurlow. The characters of Fox and North rendered the coalition peculiarly easy. Both were singularly incapable of any rancorous or enduring animosity, and both were men on whose minds political principles

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[1] *Parl. Hist.* xxiii. 174.

[2] On July 14, 1782, Loughborough wrote to Eden: 'I have taken a notion that a strong and durable administration is not impossible. . . . The first thing is to reconcile Lord North and Fox. The first you know is irreconcilable to no man; the second will feel his ancient resentment totally absorbed in his more recent hostility, which I think he has no other probable means of gratifying.'—Auckland *Correspondence*, i. 9. On August 22, Eden wrote to Loughborough: My view of the matter at present is this: the Foxites and Shelburnites are utterly irreconcilable, and each set has a large class of transferable appendages which might easily be attached to any well-formed Government. Under these circumstances, we might, I think, among us mould and fashion the third party in a way not unacceptable to the King or the public, and very useful to both.'—Ibid. pp. 28, 29.

[3] Ibid. p. 30. Lord Carlisle also appears to have been offended at the personal disregard shown to him by Shelburne.—Ibid. p. 39.

hung very lightly. The amiable levity of the one, and the amiable weakness of the other, were well fitted to agree. They had been at one time connected in the Government, and it appears probable that even in the moments of their fiercest opposition they were divided by no serious personal dislike. Walpole relates how after one of Fox's most furious invectives against Lord G. Germaine, North laughingly said to him, 'I am glad you did not fall on me, Charles, for you were in high feather to-day.' 'I may assert,' said Gibbon, who knew them both, 'with some degree of assurance that in their political conflict those great antagonists had never felt any personal animosity to each other, that their reconciliation was easy and sincere, that their friendship has never been clouded by the shadow of suspicion or jealousy.' On each specific question that arose Fox felt vehemently and passionately, and being beyond all things a debater, he expressed his views with the utmost energy his vocabulary could furnish, but he thought little of the future effect of his words, and the recollection of old conflicts left no sting in his mind. Parliamentary reporting had only very recently risen to importance, and he never appears to have realised the tremendous significance and the enduring character which it gives to every word uttered in debate. In 1779 and in 1780, as we have seen, he had already been perfectly prepared to coalesce with at least a portion of the ministry which he had so fiercely assailed. If he had no present difference with a statesman, the fact that he had formerly opposed him scarcely weighed on his mind. Almost his only real personal antipathy was Shelburne, and it is remarkable that with respect to that statesman, North's feelings perfectly coincided with those of Fox.

Fox and North met on February 14, and they agreed to lay aside all former animosity, and to found

an alliance 'on mutual good-will and confidence,' 'Amicitiæ sempiternæ, inimicitiæ placabiles.' Fox afterwards said, when defending his conduct in Parliament: 'I disdain to keep alive in my bosom the enmities which I may bear to men when the cause of those enmities is no more. . . . The American war was the cause of the enmity between the noble lord and myself. The American war and the American question are at an end. . . . While that system was maintained, nothing could be more asunder than the noble lord and myself. But it is now no more, and it is, therefore, wise and candid to put an end also to the ill-will and the feuds which it occasioned. When I was the friend of the noble lord, I found him open and sincere; when the enemy, honourable and manly. I never had reason to say of him that he practised any of those little subterfuges, tricks, and stratagems which I found in others—any of those behindhand and paltry manœuvres which destroy confidence between human beings and degrade the character of the statesman and the man.'[1]

The terms of the compact between the two statesmen were soon arranged. They agreed that after the measures of the Rockingham Ministry nothing more need be done towards reducing the influence of the Crown by economical reform, and that this great question which had formerly divided them was for the present at an end. On the subject of parliamentary reform they still differed, but not more than Fox and Burke, and they agreed that the question should be an open one, as it had been under the Rockingham Ministry. The essential need of the time in the opinion of Fox and Burke was to put an end to the system of weak, divided, and dependent ministries which had existed since the accession of George III., and to

[1] Russell's *Life of Fox*, i. 353, 354.

establish a strong and permanent Government which could command the whole energies of the State, and in which the direction of affairs should rest entirely with the responsible ministers of the Crown. This, in the opinion of the Whig leaders, should be the main object of the Whig party, and North declared himself fully prepared to co-operate with them in attaining it. When Fox urged that 'the King should not be suffered to be his own minister,' North answered, 'If you mean there should not be a Government by departments, I agree with you. I think it a very bad system. There should be one man or a Cabinet to govern the whole and direct every measure. Government by departments was not brought in by me. I found it so, and had not vigour or resolution to put an end to it. The King ought to be treated with every sort of respect and attention, but the appearance of power is all that a King of this country can have.'[1] It was hoped by Fox that on the downfall of Shelburne several members of his ministry would accept office under the new system, and that a Government of irresistible strength would thus at last be formed which no royal intrigue could influence or overthrow.[2]

The belief that the establishment of a strong, united, and independent administration was the first political

[1] Fox's *Correspondence*, ii. 37, 38.

[2] About a year before the coalition was formed, Sir Gilbert Elliot wrote to Sir James Harris: 'The grand principle of distinction and separation between parties [the American dispute] is now removed. There is at least an opportunity, therefore, for coalition without the sacrifice of former principles on either side. That the opportunity may not be lost by the d——d intricacies of arrangements, private interests, and personal considerations, should be the prayer morning and evening of every true lover of his country. *All* the ability of the country united to direct *all* the resources of the country to one good end is a prospect which I hope is not quite out of sight.'—Lady Minto's *Life of Sir G. Elliot*, i. 75, 76.

need of the country, and the belief that no such administration could possibly exist under the leadership of Shelburne, were the two grounds upon which the Coalition of 1783 was defended. There was another consideration which was probably not without its influence. There had been one instance in recent English history of a coalition which in some respects was not wholly unlike that of Fox and North. The torrent of invective and contempt which the elder Pitt had poured upon Newcastle had fully equalled that which Fox had poured upon North, and Pitt had made it his avowed and leading object to drive Newcastle out of political life. He failed in his attempt. He found the assistance of Newcastle essential to the stability of his Government. He allied himself with him at a time when his invectives were still ringing in the ears of members of Parliament, and the Coalition Ministry of 1757 had been perhaps the most glorious and successful in English history.

The precedent at this time occurred to many minds. Chatham had familiarised English politicians with the idea of combining discordant politicians under the same political banner,[1] and there had been many attempts in the present reign to form a strong Government by including in it men who, though they all called themselves Whigs, were in reality quite as hostile to one another as Fox and North. The essential question was whether the new Coalition could secure the confidence of the nation and put an end to the period of administrative impotence and anarchy. 'Unless a real good Government is the consequence of this junction,' wrote Fitz-

[1] Eden, in a remarkable paper describing the secret negotiation he carried on with the Opposition, as the agent of the North Government in March 1778, mentions that Fox told him that 'he knew that Lord Chatham thought any change insufficient which did not comprehend or annihilate every party in the kingdom.' — Fox's *Correspondence*, i. 182.

patrick, 'nothing can justify it to the public.' 'Nothing,' said Fox himself, 'but success can justify it.'

There were, however, material differences between the Coalitions of 1757 and of 1783. Pitt had not to encounter the persistent hostility of the King. He allied himself with his former enemy for the purpose of conducting a great national war. He took not one means, but the only means of creating a strong and permanent Government, and his genius and character enabled him to sway with an irresistible power the national sentiments. The abilities of Fox, though of a lower kind, were very great; but neither his private life nor his public life had been of a character to win the confidence of the English nation. Wilberforce expressed their sentiments with great truth when he described the Coalition as partaking of 'the vices of both its parents; the corruption of the one and the violence of the other.'

Many followers on both sides fell away; but it was noticed that there was most restiveness among the followers of North, and that the conduct of North was more blamed than that of Fox. He was much the elder statesman. His complete forgiveness of the outrageous attacks of which he had been the object seemed to the public mean-spirited and contemptible. The King had given him a larger measure of confidence and friendship than he had accorded to any other minister, had selected him as the special agent of his policy, had showered personal favours upon himself and his family.[1] North had now leagued himself with the statesman whom the King most bitterly detested, for the express purpose of restricting the royal influence. He led the

[1] For a list of the favours conferred on North and his family see Jesse's *Memoirs of George III.* ii. 421.

party which, if it was not the most enlightened, was at least supposed to be the most steady and persistent in its policy, its principles, its prejudices, and its connections, and he had placed that party not merely at the mercy, but in a great measure under the direction of a man who had been for many years its most violent enemy. He had, in fact, steered his fleet into the enemy's harbour. The terms of the alliance were so unequal that, although the Tories formed the larger portion of the Coalition, North, and Lord Stormont, who became President of the Council, were their sole representatives in the Cabinet.

The conduct of North appeared the more strange because during his late ministry he had shown himself not only willing but eager to abandon office. What his exact motives were must be left in some degree to conjecture, for he never fully explained them. It was argued by the advocates of the Coalition that the union of two out of the three parties had become absolutely inevitable; that if North took no active steps in this direction the bulk of his followers would certainly secede to the Government, and the consequence of his party would be extinguished; that if he allowed an unpopular peace to pass unopposed, his reputation would be irretrievably ruined. The world would say that he had tacitly confessed that no better terms could be expected after his war, and he would thus bear at once the odium of a disastrous war and of an ignominious peace. He was one of the most irresolute of men and extremely susceptible to personal influences, and his son, as well as some of his intimate friends, were very anxious for the alliance. For some time he refused, and declared that he would not connect himself with Fox, and that he intended to support Shelburne.[1] He appears, how-

[1] Auckland *Correspondence*, i. 41. Fox appears also to have had his moments of indecision. He called on the Duke of Graf-

ever, to have been irritated by perceiving that there was a desire to proscribe him personally. Shelburne leaned strongly to a junction with him; but Pitt, Camden, and Grafton all positively refused to serve with him. It accordingly became a main object of the Administration to break up his party, to detach his followers, and to allure them into the ministerial ranks. An attempt was made to terrify him into supporting the preliminaries of peace by an assurance that Shelburne, if defeated, would at once resign, that Fox and Pitt would then combine to form a new Government, and that one of its first conditions would be the permanent exclusion of North from office. The information had a different effect from what was intended, for it induced North to hasten his junction with Fox.

It is possible that another and a nobler motive was not without its influence. In spite of his great sagacity and great parliamentary talents North could not but feel that his ministry had been a most disastrous one both for his country and for his own reputation, and it had been disastrous mainly because he had not acted on his own judgment, but had suffered himself to be systematically interfered with and overruled by the King. No other English statesman had such bitter reason to feel the evil of royal intervention in politics, and it was perhaps not unnatural that he should have wished to put an end to it, and in a new system and with new connections to regain some part of the reputation which he had lost.

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ton after the Coalition had been formed, and (the Duke says) 'dwelt on the necessity of the Cabinet proposing the head of the Treasury, and that nothing could move him and his friends from this point; he professed that he was totally at a loss to guess how affairs would turn out; he owned that he felt the greatest objections to join Lord North and his friends, and yet perhaps it was best, though he agreed it would not be lasting.' —Grafton's *Autobiography*.

For a time the alliance was completely successful. A resolution censuring the terms of peace as unnecessarily bad was introduced and was supported by both sections of the Opposition. Judging from the reports in the 'Parliamentary History,' the speech of North appears to have been by far the ablest and most exhaustive in the debate; but Pitt was felt to have expressed the truth when he said that the resolution was much more due to a desire to force Lord Shelburne from the Treasury than to any real conviction that the ministers deserved censure for the concessions they had made. Many country gentlemen who had been accustomed to look upon the support of the royal authority as the first object of their policy, and a few ardent reformers who had for years denounced North as the incarnation and representative of all that was most corrupt in English politics, refused to follow their respective chiefs; but the resolution of censure was carried on the morning of February 22 by 207 to 190. On the 24th Lord Shelburne resigned, and the other ministers only continued to hold their offices till their successors were appointed.

The King bitterly resented the resignation, and believed that the position was still tenable.[1] Besides negotiating the peace, Shelburne had during his short ministry abolished several superfluous offices; he had begun a negotiation for a commercial treaty with America based upon those free trade principles which he understood more fully and defended more ably than any other contemporary statesman, and he had taken an opportunity to say that he was still in favour of parliamentary reform, and prepared to add one hundred members to the county representation. There is not the least reason to believe that he would have acted as

[1] Buckingham *Papers*, i. 303.

a mere puppet in the hands of the King, who, indeed, appears solely to have supported him through his detestation of Fox. Shelburne, however, was discontented with all about him, and was personally so unpopular that no combination was likely to succeed in which he was prominent. 'It was strange,' as Dundas said, 'the impression entertained of Lord Shelburne's character, but it was so.'

The King was furious at the success of the Coalition, and determined that he would not, except under the most extreme necessity, put himself into their hands. From February 24 till April 2 there was no fixed Government though Parliament was sitting, though the peace was not yet definitively signed, though the supplies had not yet been voted. The King applied to Pitt and offered to place him at the head of the Treasury, but after some deliberation, and with his usual great discretion, Pitt, seeing that the time was not yet ripe, declined the splendid prize. The King sounded the other members of the Cabinet, but found that no one would undertake the task. He tried Lord Gower, but Lord Gower would give him no assistance. He tried to detach North from the Coalition, and offered him the Treasury on condition that Fox and his following were excluded. He then consented to admit Fox provided that some one belonging to neither party held the Treasury, but Fox positively insisted on the Duke of Portland. He consented at length to this also, but broke off the negotiation upon Fox's determination to remove Thurlow from the Chancellorship, and to place the Seals in commission. He again eagerly pressed the government on Pitt. He made overtures to Temple, who was still Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. He appealed without success to Thomas Pitt, the nephew of Chatham. He made no secret to anyone of the violence of his hostility to the new party. He spoke to William

Grenville of North 'in terms of strong resentment and disgust,' and imputed to his conduct all the disasters of the country. Fox and the Duke of Portland he 'loaded with every expression of abhorrence.' He deputed Lord Ashburton to tell Shelburne that he would consider him a disgraced man if he ever supported the Coalition in government. Meeting Lord Guilford, the father of North, he went up to him wringing his hands and saying, 'Did I ever think, my Lord Guilford, that Lord North would have delivered me in this manner to Mr. Fox?' At his levée he was ostentatiously civil to Shelburne and his colleagues, and ostentatiously rude to the members of the Coalition. The Treasury, however, was empty, Parliament was impatient, and it was necessary to submit. On April 2, 1783, the King at last consented to accept the Duke of Portland as the head of the Treasury, and to allow him to form the Government on his own terms.[1]

In a letter written on the previous day to Lord Temple he clearly showed the determination that animated him. 'I have been thwarted,' he said, 'in every attempt to keep the administration of affairs out of the hands of the most unprincipled Coalition the annals of this or any other nation can equal. I have withstood it till not a single man is willing to come to my assistance, and till the House of Commons has taken every step but insisting on this faction being by name elected ministers. To end a conflict which stops every wheel of Government, and which would affect public credit if it continued much longer, I intend this night to acquaint that *grateful* Lord North that the seven Cabinet Councillors the Coalition has named shall kiss hands to-

[1] The fullest account of these transactions will be found in the letters of W. Grenville describing his conversations with the King. —Buckingham *Papers*, vol. i.

morrow. . . . A ministry which I have avowedly attempted to avoid by calling on every other description of men, cannot be supposed to have either my favour or confidence; and as such I shall most certainly refuse any honours they may ask for. I trust the eyes of the nation will soon be opened, as my sorrow may prove fatal to my health if I remain longer in this thraldom. . . . I hope many months will not elapse before the Grenvilles, the Pitts, and other men of abilities and character, will relieve me from a situation that nothing could have compelled me to submit to but the supposition that no other means remained of preventing the public finances from being materially affected.'[1]

In the new ministry the Duke of Portland was First Lord of the Treasury, Fox and North were joint Secretaries of State, Lord John Cavendish was Chancellor of the Exchequer, Keppel, who had now returned to his old allegiance, First Lord of the Admiralty, Stormont President of the Council, and Carlisle Privy Seal. Burke resumed his former place of Paymaster of the Forces, without a seat in the Cabinet. Sheridan was Secretary to the Treasury. Lord Northington was Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. The Great Seal was placed in commission, Loughborough being the Chief Commissioner. Richmond was urgently invited to join his old party, but he emphatically refused, saying that he had seen his name at the bottom of too many protests against North to serve with him. Fox was still more anxious to obtain the assistance of Pitt, but the young statesman of twenty-three, who had already twice refused the head of the Treasury, positively declined to serve with North, and he was now rapidly rising to the position of a great independent leader. Sandwich, who had long shared with North and Germaine the chief odium of the

[1] Buckingham *Papers*, i. 219.

American war, and who had for many years been in the first rank of administration, consented to accept the politically insignificant office of Ranger of St. James' and Hyde Park.

The Coalition Government had great parliamentary strength, and it was a matter of some doubt whether it was seriously unpopular in the country. It is remarkable that among the desperate efforts that were made to prevent its establishment, the expedient of dissolving Parliament never seems to have occurred either to the King or to his advisers. Fox and Lord John Cavendish having accepted office were both returned unopposed, though the first represented Westminster, which was one of the most important town constituencies, and the second Yorkshire, which was the most considerable county constituency in the kingdom.

The few months that elapsed before the prorogation were not very eventful. Pitt brought forward again the subject of parliamentary reform in a series of resolutions, asserting that new measures were required for the prevention of bribery at elections, that boroughs should be disfranchised when the majority of voters were proved to be corrupt, and that an addition should be made to the representation of the counties and of the metropolis. The growing interest in the question was shown by the multitude of petitions that were presented, and the speech of the mover, though it appears in the parliamentary reports very verbose and a little juvenile in its rhetoric, seems to have made an extraordinary impression on all sides of the House. It is remarkable that Pitt still described 'the secret influence of the Crown' as 'sapping the very foundation of liberty by corruption,' and he attributed all the disasters of the American war to the servility of Parliament. Fox strongly supported and North opposed the resolutions, and the latter, in an eloquent vindication of his

American policy, asserted that, until a succession of unparalleled disasters had broken the spirit of the people, the American war had been the most popular that had been carried on for many years. The resolutions were rejected in a very full House by 293 to 149.[1] Sawbridge's annual motion for shortening the duration of Parliament was rejected by 121 to 56, and a measure of Pitt for reforming some abuses in public offices was carried through the Commons but rejected in the Lords.

In the Cabinet, though a few slight differences arose, the complete harmony of feeling that now subsisted between Fox and North prevented the smallest symptom of disruption. The minister whose conduct appears to have thrown most discredit on the Government was Burke, whose speeches for several months past had shown a wildness of passion which was thought, with some reason, to indicate that his mind was positively diseased, and which sometimes almost deprived him of the ear of the House.[2] He was guilty, too, under the influence of an excessive but most ill-judged pity, of the extraordinary administrative blunder of restoring to their places two clerks who had been dismissed by his predecessor Barré on a well-founded charge of malversation, and who were still awaiting their trial. 'One of them,' Burke said, 'had been with him and appeared almost distracted. He was absolutely

[1] *Parl. Hist.* xxiii. 827–875.

[2] See Walpole's *Last Journals*, ii. 485, 553. The Prussian traveller Moritz was in the House when Burke made the extraordinarily wild speech on the occasion of his resignation which is reported in the *Parl. Hist.* (xxiii. 180–183). He says: 'Burke now stood up and made a most eloquent though florid speech in praise of the late Marquis of Rockingham. As he did not meet with sufficient attention, and heard much talking and many murmurs, he said with much vehemence and a sense of injured merit, "This is not treatment for so old a member of Parliament as I am, and I will be heard,' on which there was immediately a most profound silence.'—Pinkerton's *Voyages*, ii. 569.

afraid the poor man would lose his senses; this much he was sure, that the sight of his grey hairs and the distraction in which he had seen him had so far affected and overcome him that he was scarcely able to come down to the House.'[1] On one occasion Sheridan actually forced Burke down upon his seat in order to prevent a furious explosion of anger.[2] On the great question of parliamentary reform, when he rose to speak, a crowd of members at once left the House, and Burke refused to proceed.[3] His language and images were sometimes of a kind that no deliberative assembly should have tolerated.[4] He was now studying Indian politics with a passionate earnestness, and the wrongs which he believed to have been perpetrated on the Indian people by Warren Hastings were beginning to take a complete possession of his mind.

The King treated his ministers with cold civility. He would make no peers. He would give no assistance. When Fox talked of amending the terms of peace the King curtly told him that he could take no further interest in the subject, and that it was no wonder that other nations slighted England after the vote of the House of Commons in February 1782 demanding the cession of America, and he recurred to this vote again and again. On the whole, however, Fox imagined that by showing himself studiously deferential he was slightly improving his position. The King's real feelings were, however, well known to his friends. Lord Temple mentions in his diary how the King spoke to him 'with strong expressions of resentment and disgust of his ministers, and of personal abhorrence of Lord North,

[1] *Parl. Hist.* xxiii. 903; Walpole's *Last Journals*, ii. 626, 627. This clerk shortly after committed suicide.

[2] *Parl. Hist.* xxiii. 803.

[3] Ibid. 864.

[4] For an extreme instance of this see ibid. 918.

whom he charged with treachery and ingratitude of the blackest nature. He repeated, that to such a ministry he never would give his confidence, and that he would take the first moment for dismissing them.'[1] He was profoundly unhappy, and was accustomed to say that he wished he were eighty or ninety, or dead. One slight and suspicious overture of reconciliation, however, was made. Thurlow intimated that if he received the Seals the disposition of the King would in some measure change; but Fox, who knew by experience that Thurlow was never so dangerous an enemy to a ministry as when he sat in its Cabinet, positively declined.[2]

The Prince of Wales had ostentatiously and indecently attached himself to the Coalition Ministry, and the King was accustomed to call it his son's ministry. The Prince at this time came of age, and it was necessary to provide for his establishment. Fox proposed the very large sum of 100,000*l.* a year, which is said to have been already offered by Shelburne; and, although both North and Lord John Cavendish thought the sum too large, they suffered themselves to be overruled. The King agreed that the establishment of the Prince of Wales should be settled by Portland, and when Portland informed him of the intention of the Cabinet he was understood to have fully acquiesced. Soon after, however, when the House of Lords had been actually summoned, he declared his violent opposition to the plan. Desiring that the income of the Prince should be less large and more dependent, he offered 50,000*l.* a year out of his own Civil List. The ministers being now pledged to the Prince could not recede, and it appeared for a time probable that the King was about openly to break with and to dismiss them. On

[1] Buckingham *Papers*, i. 303.
[2] Fox's *Correspondence*, ii. 95, 96.

June 17 Fox wrote to Northington, that the Administration would probably not outlive the next day. 'The whole,' he said, 'is quite sudden, and was never dreamt of by me, at least till yesterday. . . . The immediate cause of quarrel is the Prince of Wales's establishment, which we thought perfectly agreed upon a week ago.'[1] On Lord Temple's advice, however, the King appears to have determined not to make this the occasion of the dismissal, and the Prince of Wales extricated the ministry from their difficulty by releasing them from their pledge. He received 50,000*l.* a year from the Civil List in addition to the revenue from the Duchy of Cornwall, which was estimated at about 12,000*l.* a year, and Parliament voted 60,000*l.* for his outfit.[2]

One of the chief reasons that Temple gave for advising the King not to make this the occasion of an open breach was that the signature of the definitive treaties of peace was certain to injure the ministry. They were signed in September, and, as was anticipated, they were in no material respect different from the preliminary treaties which the present ministers, when in opposition, had so severely censured; though a few slight ambiguities were removed, and an additional clause was introduced for the protection of British subjects in Tobago. The terms of the peace were, it is true, very different from those which Fox had insisted on when he was Secretary of State under Rockingham, but it would have been scarcely possible at this advanced stage of the negotiation to have reopened the settlement, and, at all events, only a very strong Administration could have ventured on such a step. Holland, under the influence of France, had at last

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[1] Fox's *Correspondence*, ii. 114.

[2] Ibid. ii. 83, 84, 112–117; Buckingham *Papers*, i. 304; *Parl. Hist.* xxiii. 1031–1041.

acceded to the preliminaries on the basis of a mutual restitution of conquests, except the town of Negapatam, which was ceded to Great Britain.

'The Coalition,' wrote Fox about this time, 'gains in my opinion both strength and credit, and the only source of weakness is in the idea of the King's dislike.' Even its opponents, he said, had now given up all hope of creating dissension between its two parts; while, 'on the other hand, Shelburne, Temple, Thurlow, Pitt, &c., are some of them quite unarrangeable, and have to my certain knowledge hardly any communication one with the other.' 'Next Session of Parliament,' he wrote in another letter, 'will be a great crisis. I own I am sanguine about it. Nothing can go so well as we do among ourselves; but in my particular situation it is impossible not to feel every day what an amazing advantage it would be to the country if it could ever be in such a state as to promise a permanent administration in the opinion of Europe. If Pitt could be persuaded (but I despair of it), I am convinced if he could, he would do more real service to the country than any man ever did.' 'However, the first business we shall have to bring on is of a very delicate nature—I mean the East Indian business.'[1]

This question was, indeed, one which it had become wholly impossible to evade, and during the last few years Indian affairs had again become very serious and pressing. The Supreme Council and the Supreme Court were violently opposed to one another, and a not less bitter quarrel divided Francis and the majority in the Council from the Governor-General, Warren Hastings. The invasion of Hyder Ali threatened for a time an almost complete destruction of the British power in India, and the complaints of maladministration

[1] Fox's *Correspondence*, ii. 118, 119, 208.

do not appear to have at all diminished since the Act of 1773. In 1781 the Charter of the Company which was about to expire was renewed with some additional and stringent provisions. The Act stated that the Company had duly paid by June 1778 the loan they had obtained in 1773, that they had reduced their bond debt to the limits appointed in the Act of that year, and that since June 1778 they had been in possession of all the profits arising from Indian territory without any participation by the public, and it provided that the Company should pay a single sum of 400,000*l.* to the public in discharge of all claims on this account up to March 1, 1781. The former privileges of the Company were now extended till three years' notice after March 1, 1791. The Company were authorised to pay a dividend of 8 per cent. out of their clear profits, but three-quarters of the remainder was to go as a tribute to the public, and the ministers assumed a complete control over the civil and military administration of India.[1] A Select Committee, of which Burke was the most prominent member, was in the same year appointed to consider the disputes which had arisen, and also the whole administration of justice in India; and a second and secret Committee, of which Dundas was chairman, was appointed for the more restricted purpose of inquiring into the causes of the war in the Carnatic and into the state of the British possessions on the coast. They appear to have done their work admirably, and their reports furnished a vast mass of authentic evidence, throwing a strong light on the maladministration, fraud, and tyranny in India, on the impossibility under the existing framework of government of repressing abuses or giving any unity to the administration, and on the criminal, or at least very dubious, character of

[1] 21 Geo. III. cap. 65.

some of the proceedings of Warren Hastings. The subject had much occupied Lord North among the many cares that darkened the last year of his ministry, and he had suggested that the power of the Governor-General as against the Council should be strengthened, and also that a tribunal should be established in England for the purpose of exercising jurisdiction over all servants of the Company in India. These two suggestions, as we shall see, were very fruitful; but the only step actually taken before the fall of Lord North was an enactment restricting the functions of the Supreme Court in matters relating to natives.

In April 1782, when the Rockingham Government had been formed, the reports of the Secret Committee were printed, and the subject of the many crimes that had been committed in India was brought with great elaboration before the House of Commons by Dundas. The House considered the case fully proved, and a number of condemnatory resolutions were carried. The members of the Council of Madras were severely censured, and a Bill of pains and penalties against them was read a first time. Warren Hastings, the Governor-General of Bengal, and Hornby, the President of the Bombay Council, were pronounced to have 'in sundry instances acted in a manner repugnant to the honour and policy of the nation, and thereby brought great calamities on India,' and the Directors were enjoined to recall them. The conduct of Sullivan, the Chairman of the East India Company, and the conduct of Sir Elijah Impey, the Chief Justice, were censured in the strongest terms. An address was voted to the King for the recall of Impey, and it was at the same time resolved 'that the powers given to the Governor-General and Council by the East India Act in 1773 ought to be more distinctly ascertained.' The Court of Directors in obedience to this resolution made an order for the recall of Hastings,

but the Court of Proprietors, emboldened by the death of Rockingham and the consequent change of ministry, took the extraordinary step of negativing it.[1]

Hastings was thus kept in power in defiance of both the Commons and the Directors. Shelburne appears to have been, on the whole, favourable to him; but he recalled Sir Elijah Impey, and the King's Speech, which he framed, recommended a fundamental change in the Government of India. No new step, however, was taken till the Coalition Ministry arrived in power. A few days after that event, Dundas, who was now in opposition, introduced a Bill which, among other provisions, gave the King power to recall the principal servants of the Company, and invested at the same time the Governor-General of Bengal with powers which were little short of absolute. He urged that the first power ought to be immediately exercised against Hastings, whose retention of office after the recent resolutions of the House was a grave scandal, and that the appointment of an honest and efficient governor, possessing almost uncontrolled authority, was the best means of checking the evils in India. He suggested Lord Cornwallis as the proper person for the post. A measure of this kind, however, emanating from the Opposition was certain to fail, and it now remained for the Government itself to undertake the question.

It was impossible that it could be much longer adjourned. The war of Hyder Ali had again thrown the finances of India into complete disorder. The conduct of the Proprietors in retaining Warren Hastings was both a gross insult to the Commons and a clear demonstration of the anarchical character of the constitution of the Company. All parties had pledged themselves during the last few years to the necessity of reforming the

[1] Mill's *Hist. of British India*, iv. 375–378.

government of India, and it was scarcely possible to recede after the reports of the Committees. Burke afterwards declared that he was prepared to prove that from Mount Imaus to Cape Comorin, there was not a single prince who had come in contact with the Company who had not been sold, not a single treaty which the Company had made that they had not broken, not a single prince or State that had trusted to them without being ruined.[1] If evils of this magnitude really existed no slight or superficial measure could deal with them, and Burke, who took a leading part in framing the proposed legislation, was passionately in earnest in the cause.

Two distinct Bills were introduced by the ministry. One of them prescribed a number of detailed regulations for the administration of affairs in India. The other, which was much more important, changed the whole constitution of the Company. Fox did not adopt the suggestion of Dundas that absolute power should be given to a Governor-General in India; but he adopted the other suggestion of Lord North of creating a Supreme Council in England. Instead of the existing Courts of Directors and Proprietors a new supreme body was to be appointed in England, consisting of seven commissioners, who were to be named by the Legislature, who were to be immovable, except upon an address from either House of Parliament, for four years, and who were to have an absolute power of placing or displacing all persons in the service of the Company, of ordering and administering the territories, revenues, and commerce of India. The measure was limited to four years; but after that period Fox suggested that the nomination of the commissioners should rest with the King,[2] and while the measure was in force the King was to have the power

[1] *Parl. Hist.* xxiii. 1322. [2] Russell's *Life of Fox*, ii. 31, 32.

of filling up any vacancies that occurred in the body. A second or subordinate body, consisting of nine assistant Directors, chosen by the Legislature from among the largest proprietors, was to be formed for the purpose of managing the details of commerce. Like the supreme body, these assistant Directors were to hold their seats for four years; but they might be removed either by the King upon an address of either House of Parliament, or by the concurrent proposal of five of the chief Directors, and all vacancies were to be supplied by the vote of the Proprietors.

Such are the main features of this important measure, which exercised so memorable an influence on English politics. Fox in introducing it was clearly conscious of its dangers. 'If I had considered nothing but keeping my power,' he wrote to one of his friends, 'it was the safest way to leave things as they are, or to propose some trifling alteration, and I am not at all ignorant of the political danger which I run by this bold measure; but whether I succeed or no, I shall always be glad that I attempted, because I know I have done no more than I was bound to do, in risking my power and that of my friends when the happiness of so many millions is at stake.'[1]

It may be gravely doubted whether the machinery provided by this Bill would have effectually checked the evils in India; but this question was scarcely touched by the opponents of the measure. Burke, whose noble genius had of late often shown itself strangely clouded and distorted, rose on this occasion to the full height of his power, and in a speech which deserves to rank among the masterpieces of the eloquence not only of the eighteenth century but of all time, he adjured the House to cast aside the mere passing and selfish interests of party

[1] Fox's *Correspondence*, ii. 219.

warfare, and to legislate for the true and permanent benefit of the suffering millions of Hindostan. Fox, in one of his noblest speeches, dwelt upon the same theme, and there is no reason for doubting that their motives in introducing the Bill were perfectly single-minded. On the side of the Opposition, however, the interests of the Indian people do not seem to have weighed a feather in the scale. The outcry against the measure turned almost wholly around two arguments—the violation of the charter of the Company, which was resented by all the other chartered bodies in the kingdom, and the tendency of the measure to vest the patronage of India in a small permanent body of Whig politicians.

That the charter of the Company was in some respects completely subverted by the Bill is incontestable. Its essential feature was that the power which had hitherto been exercised by a board of Directors elected by the Proprietors of the Company, was transferred to a court, appointed in the first instance by Act of Parliament. At the same time, it was truly said that the violation was not greater than that which had been effected by the Act of 1773, and not greater than that which had been proposed by Dundas in his recent Bill, and that there was the most overwhelming evidence that it was absolutely necessary. The recent proceeding of the Court of Proprietors in keeping Hastings in office in defiance of the House of Commons and of the Directors, was a conspicuous proof of this necessity, and the reports of two Committees of the House of Commons were said to have established beyond dispute that the existing authorities of the Company were incorrigibly corrupt, that the conflict between the different tribunals recognised by the charter had completely paralysed the administration of justice, and that the most horrible acts of oppression and fraud had in consequence been committed. This was in truth the main reason for legislating

on Indian affairs. When Burke was taunted with his former speeches in favour of the chartered rights of the Company, he answered that he still held that the Company had a sole right to the territorial revenues of India, and that there was nothing in the measure to lower dividends or take away commercial privileges. A right to a monopoly of political power rested, however, on a different basis from a right to raise revenue, and Parliament, which gave it, might justly resume it when it was employed for the ruin and oppression of the subjects of the Crown.

The main popular argument, however, against the Bill was that it was intended to vest in the Whig party the whole patronage of India, to secure it to them when they had passed out of office, and thus to give them an amount of corrupt influence which would enable them to balance the influence of the Crown, defy succeeding administrations, and control Parliament by their votes. Lord Fitzwilliam and the other Supreme Commissioners appointed by the Bill were men of the highest character; but they were all avowed partisans of the Government, and for four years the whole vast patronage of India would be at their disposal. It is creditable to the sagacity of North that he perceived from the beginning the use that would be made of this argument, and warned Fox that 'influence of the Crown and influence of party against Crown and people' were topics that were sure to be urged against the plan. Pitt appears to have been the chief originator of this objection, and he developed it with extraordinary skill, and with certainly not less extraordinary exaggeration. The Bill if carried, he said, would not fail to arm ministers with an influence that would make them dangerous to the State, an influence which would continue when the present ministry was dissolved, an influence which no power could resist whether in or out of office. He

denounced it as 'one of the boldest, most unprecedented, most desperate, and alarming attempts at the exercise of tyranny that ever disgraced the annals of this or any other country.'[1] The language of Thurlow was even more emphatic. In a paper presented to the King he described the measure as 'a plan to take more than half the royal power, and by that means disable the King for the rest of the reign.' If this Bill pass, he said in Parliament, 'the King will in fact take the diadem from his own head and place it on the head of Mr. Fox.'[2]

There are, as it appears to me, few things in the history of political exaggeration more extravagant than these assertions, and it may very reasonably be doubted whether such men as Pitt and Thurlow can for a moment have believed them. If the patronage and administration of India were to be vested in any elected body not chosen by the Proprietors, it is difficult to see what better course could have been adopted than to have followed the precedent of the Act of 1773 and entrusted that nomination to the Legislature. The provision making the Supreme Commissioners under ordinary circumstances irremovable for four years was consistent with the general rule of Indian appointments, and it was plainly necessary if any real reform was to be effected. The period indeed for which they were to be appointed was, as Burke truly said, even too short for the exigencies of the case, and considering the distance of India and the magnitude and complication of the abuses which had grown up in the last twenty years, it was probable that the first four years would be wholly occupied with laying the mere foundations of reform. The object of the Bill was to regulate the

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[1] *Parl. Hist.* xxiii. 1279.

[2] Buckingham *Papers*, i. 288; Stanhope's *Life of Pitt*, i. 146.

administration of India as far as possible on the principles of a Court of Judicature, and if, as most persons now agreed, it was necessary to place an absolute power over Indian administration in the hands either of a person or a council, it seemed safer to entrust it to a body in England under the immediate eye of Parliament, than to a governor or a council in India. It would no doubt have been better if the Government had divided its appointments between the two parties, or had selected men who were not identified with either; but it is very doubtful whether any English Government of the eighteenth century in creating important offices in England would have acted in such a manner, and the notion that it was possible for the new court to outweigh the influence of the Crown, to defy successive administrations, and to obtain through its patronage an ascendency in Parliament, seems to me almost grotesquely absurd. These dreaded commissioners were only to hold their office for four years, and all vacancies were to be filled by the appointment of the Crown. They could be at any time removed by the King upon an address of either House of Parliament if they were found guilty of grave abuse of their powers, and no administration could exist in England which did not command a parliamentary majority. They were also obliged to perform all their duties under constant superintendence and control. They were bound, like the old Directors, to communicate all their correspondence to and from India to the Secretary of State, and to lay before Parliament at short intervals all their proceedings, as well as the reasons for their more important decisions.[1]

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[1] See Fox's *Correspondence*, ii. 99, 218. *Annual Register*, 1784, pp. 59, 68. *Parl. Hist.* xxiii. 1200–1202. Mill's *History of British India*, iv. 381–390.

To suppose that a body so formed and so limited could have been a serious danger to the Constitution, even if it had been actuated by the most malevolent intentions, and had applied all its energies to English and not to Indian politics, appears to me absolutely extravagant. If, indeed, Fox's proposal had been carried out, and the nomination of commissioners after the first four years had passed to the Crown, the change would have been much more favourable than unfavourable to royal influence. The political importance, however, of this patronage was enormously exaggerated. Some very lucrative prizes would no doubt have fallen to the partisans of the ministers, but the immense majority of the offices must necessarily have been held by men whose lives were spent in India and who were wholly beyond the area of English politics.

The exaggerations of Pitt and Thurlow were repeated on all sides. One member declared that if the Bill passed, it would consign 'the constitution, the liberties, the glory, and the dignity of the British Empire to ultimate and certain ruin.'[1] Another predicted that 'the whole treasure of India poured forth like an irresistible flood upon this country would sweep away our liberties and all that we can call our own.'[2] Lord Camden himself foresaw the time when 'the King of England and the King of Bengal would be contending for superiority in the British Parliament.' The cry was speedily taken up in the country, and every artifice was employed to spread it. Tories denounced the Bill as a monstrous attempt to deprive the Sovereign of his power. Reformers denounced it as a colossal scheme for parliamentary corruption. The Bank and many other corporations petitioned against it as containing a precedent fatal to every charter in the kingdom. The King be-

[1] *Parl. Hist.* xxiii. 1312. [2] Ibid. 1229.

lieved, or pretended to believe, that it would sap his throne, and he saw clearly that the time had come to strike a blow against the ministry he hated. In the House of Commons nothing could be done. The personal authority of the Sovereign had been greatly and effectually reduced by the recent measures, and the Coalition Ministry fully retained its majority. The East India Bill passed its final stages by majorities of 229 to 120, of 217 to 103, of 208 to 102. But in the Lords there was a large section who were connected with the Court, and wholly subservient to the King, and it was possible to act upon these. Temple, who had just come over from Ireland, and Thurlow, who was eager to regain office, were the two chief counsellors of the King, and they urged that the Bill might be thrown out in the Lords, but only if the King himself intervened to influence votes.

On December 11, while the Bill was before the Lords, Temple had a private audience with the King, and he came away bearing a paper written apparently with the King's own hand, authorising him 'to say that whoever voted for the India Bill was not only not his friend, but would be considered by him as an enemy.' The communication passed rapidly from bench to bench, and its effect was instantaneous. 'The bishops waver,' wrote Fitzpatrick, 'and the Thanes fly from us; in my opinion, the Bill will not pass.' On December 15 an adjournment was carried against the ministers by a majority of 8, and on the 17th the House of Lords rejected the Bill by 95 votes against 76. 'We are beat in the House of Lords,' wrote Fox immediately after, 'by such treachery on the part of the King, and such meanness on the part of his friends, as one could not expect, either from him or them. . . . We are not yet out, but I suppose we shall be to-morrow. However, we are so strong that nobody can undertake without

madness ; and, if they do, I think we shall destroy them almost as soon as they are formed.'[1]

The King hoped that the ministry would have resigned, but they determined to spare him no part of the odium of the transaction. On the 15th, the very day of the first adverse vote in the Lords,[2] Mr. Baker moved in the House of Commons, 'that it was necessary to declare that to report any opinion, or pretended opinion of his Majesty, upon any Bill or other proceeding depending in either House of Parliament, with a view to influence the votes of the members, is a high crime and misdemeanour, derogatory to the honour of the Crown, a breach of the fundamental privileges of Parliament, and subversive of the constitution of this country.' In spite of the vehement opposition of Pitt, this resolution, which was virtually a vote of censure upon the Crown, was carried by 153 to 80, with the support of the ministers. In the course of the debate Fox quoted with much applause a saying of George Grenville, the father of Lord Temple, when he had experienced 'a similar treachery.' 'I will never again,' he said, 'be at the head of a string of Janissaries who are always ready to strangle or despatch me on the least signal.' By another resolution, which was moved by Erskine, the House pledged itself to pursue the redress of the abuses in the government of India, and pronounced any person to be a public enemy who should advise his Majesty to interrupt the discharge of that important duty. Late on the night of the 18th, the King having received no resignations from his ministers, sent a message to the two Secretaries of State ordering them immediately to deliver up their seals of office, and send them by their

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[1] Fox's *Correspondence*, ii. 221.

[2] This is the date given in the *Annual Register*, 1784, p. 70. According to the *Parl. Hist.* xxiv. 196, Baker's motion was on the 17th.

under secretaries. Next morning their seals were delivered to Temple, who, as Secretary of State, wrote letters of dismissal to the other ministers.

It was comparatively easy to overthrow the ministry, but the difficulties of replacing it were enormous ; and when, on December 19, Pepper Arden rose in the House of Commons to move for a new writ for the borough of Appleby in the room of William Pitt, who had accepted the offices of First Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer, the announcement was received from the Opposition side with a loud burst of derision. So many leading statesmen had been absorbed in the Coalition, and the attitude of the House of Commons was so decisively in its favour, that it was doubtful whether a new ministry could be even formed. Some forty-eight hours after accepting the seals of Secretary of State, Temple, who was expected to be the leader of the House of Lords, and on whose experience Pitt had much reliance, insisted on resigning, it is supposed because he did not obtain a dukedom. Neither Camden nor Grafton would throw their fortunes into an enterprise which seemed desperate. Shelburne, even in this moment of extreme necessity, Pitt determined not to call into the ministry.* The places were filled from various connections. Thurlow became again Chancellor. Lord Gower, who had been a prominent member of the Tory party in the beginning of Lord North's Administration, tendered his services, and was made President of the Council. The Duke of Rutland, who had been one of the recent acquisitions of the Shelburne Ministry, was Privy Seal. Lord Sydney and Lord Carmarthen were the Secretaries of State, and Lord Howe became First Lord of the Admiralty. The Cabinet consisted of only seven members; but the Duke of Richmond, though he for the present declined a seat in it, went back to his old office of Master-General of the Ordnance,

and Dundas took his former place of Treasurer of the Navy.

The supporters of the fallen Government refused to regard these arrangements as serious, and believed that they must necessarily return almost immediately to power. They commanded an overwhelming majority in the House of Commons, and they at once made the false step of endeavouring to prevent a dissolution. According to the view of Fox, a measure of transcendent importance, which was supported by the great majority of the representative chamber, and which had no natural or constitutional danger to fear, had been suddenly arrested by a grossly unconstitutional interference of the Sovereign, and there was no adequate reason for appealing to the constituencies or interrupting for any considerable period the course of affairs. 'No one,' he said, 'would say that the prerogative of dissolution ought to be exercised merely to suit the convenience of an ambitious young man,' and he declared that if a dissolution took place without any solid and substantial reasons, he would in the next Parliament 'move a very serious inquiry into the business and bring the advisers of it to account.' Pitt had not yet been re-elected, but Mr. Bankes assured the House that he was authorised by him to declare that he had at present 'no intention whatever to advise either a dissolution or a prorogation.' In spite of this assurance, an address to the King beseeching him to allow them to proceed on the business of the session without dissolution was carried. The King, in his answer, assured them that 'after such an adjournment as the present circumstances might seem to require,' he would not interrupt their meeting by any exercise of the prerogative either of prorogation or dissolution, and on this assurance Fox consented to permit an adjournment for the brief Christmas holiday. The

House separated on December 26, to meet again on January 12, 1784.

There is nothing in English parliamentary history more wonderful than the position occupied by Pitt in the struggle which ensued. Though Prime Minister and Chancellor of the Exchequer, he was not yet twenty-five, and as he was the only Cabinet minister in the House of Commons, he had to bear the whole brunt of the contest with one of the most formidable Oppositions ever known in England. The hitherto unrivalled debating powers of Fox, the tried experience of North, the massive knowledge and varied genius of Burke, the brilliant wit of Sheridan, the legal acumen and forensic talent of Erskine, were all arrayed against him, and their following outnumbered his own by at least forty or fifty votes. His legal advisers in the Commons were men of very little ability, and, except Dundas and Wilberforce, he had no considerable debater to assist him. His Government was not only weak in experience and ability, but also heterogeneous in its composition, and it had been called into being by an act of flagrantly unconstitutional interference which exasperated the Opposition to the utmost. An English king, though he cannot ultimately resist the determination of Parliament, and though his interference in political quarrels is nearly always inexpedient, has by the Constitution a very considerable power of arresting or retarding legislation which he dislikes. He may interpose his veto, he may dismiss his servants, he may appeal to his people by a dissolution. But a sovereign who, in the course of a debate, instructs one of his confidants to say that he will consider anyone his enemy who votes for a measure which he had suffered his ministers to introduce without a word of remonstrance or the slightest intimation of his disapproval, is acting in a manner which is both grossly unconstitutional and grossly treacherous. George III.

had acted in this manner, and, although the resignation of Temple had removed the chief agent in the transaction, Pitt, who can hardly have been ignorant of it, and who owed his power to its success, could not escape the stigma.

His position seemed to the best observers a hopeless one. 'What will follow,' wrote Fox, a few days before the Christmas adjournment, 'is not yet known; but I think there can be very little doubt but our Administration will again be established. . . . The confusion of the enemy is beyond all description, and the triumph of our friends proportionable.'[1] Mrs. Crewe wittily expressed the common belief of the Whig circles in which she moved, when she said, 'Pitt may do what he likes during the holidays, but it will only be a mince-pie Administration.'[2] 'They have lost all character,' wrote Sir Gilbert Elliot near the end of December, 'and are considered as a set of children playing at ministers and must be sent back to school, and in a few days all will have returned to its former course.'[3]

Few things, however, are more fallible than political predictions, and the struggle of 1783–1784 added another to the many instances in which the great majority of the most sagacious and experienced judges of politics proved hopelessly at fault. On the side of the Opposition the assault was conducted mainly by Fox, and it is remarkable that Burke appears to have taken scarcely any part in these debates. None of Fox's speeches are more deserving of study. None of them exhibit more highly his transcendent and almost unapproachable excellence as a parliamentary debater, and on some of the constitutional questions which he raised he was incontestably in the right. But by one fatal error of tactics

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[1] Fox's *Correspondence*, ii. 224.
[2] Wilberforce's *Life*, i. 48.
[3] Lady Minto's *Life of Sir G. Elliot*, i. 91.

he completely wrecked his cause, while the young minister who was opposed to him conducted the conflict with consummate judgment as well as indomitable courage. There were two, and only two, really constitutional courses before Pitt. He might resign as soon as the House of Commons voted its want of confidence in his ministry, or he might at once appeal by a dissolution from the House to the country, and hold or resign his place according to the verdict. To remain in office after a vote of censure by the House of Commons and without appealing to the constituencies was utterly opposed to the spirit of the Constitution, and every week during which such a situation continued had a demoralising influence. On the other hand, his right of appeal to the one supreme judge—the electoral body —cannot reasonably be disputed. The Crown and the House of Lords were on his side, and when a contest arises between the three branches of the Legislature it is for the people alone to decide. The Crown has an undoubted power of dissolving Parliament. The House of Lords is exercising not only a legitimate, but a most useful function, when it throws out measures of the House of Commons which it believes to be contrary to the wishes of the people, and thus compels ministers either to abandon them or to give the people an opportunity of expressing their opinion at an election. When Fox had carried a vote of want of confidence against the ministers, and when they refused to resign, the Opposition should have made it their first object to facilitate, invite, and if necessary compel, an immediate dissolution. They could hardly have failed in attaining this end. Any delay would have made the position of Pitt a thoroughly false one, and must have greatly injured him with the country, and it is extremely probable that an election taking place immediately after the interference of the King would have been favourable to the Coalition. The Government

would, no doubt, have had the advantage of the unpopularity of the Coalition and of the unpopularity of the India Bill; but, on the other hand, the Opposition would have been incontestably the champions of the Constitution, which in the recent transaction had been grossly violated. It was of the utmost importance, however, that they should not abandon their constitutional position, and especially that they should not take any step manifesting a distrust of the people and a desire to withdraw the question from their judgment.

Pitt had no wish for an immediate dissolution, for he clearly saw the probability of the popular feeling in his favour acquiring an additional volume and intensity if the struggle were prolonged, and the Opposition by a fatal blunder played directly into his hands. One of the first proceedings of Fox when Parliament assembled on January 12, 1784, was to deprecate a dissolution as injurious to the interests of the country, to declare his determination to take every means of preventing it, and even to question the power of the King to dissolve Parliament during a session, while public business and petitions were pending. There had been no instance of what Burke called a 'penal dissolution' in the middle of a session since the Revolution, and Lord Somers was quoted in support of the doctrine that such a dissolution was beyond the prerogative of the Sovereign. In order to carry out these views, Fox at once moved that the House should resolve itself into a committee on the state of the nation, refusing even to allow Pitt to deliver a message from the King, and the Opposition made every effort to extort from Pitt a pledge that there should be no dissolution. Pitt answered that 'he would never compromise the royal prerogative nor bargain it away in the House of Commons,' and Fox then proceeded to take measures to make a dissolution difficult or impossible. He carried a resolution pronouncing it a high

crime and misdemeanour to issue after a dissolution or prorogation any money which, though voted for the public services, had not yet been appropriated by Parliament. He moved for accounts of the sums issued from December 19, 1783, to January 14, 1784, for services voted in the present session, but not appropriated by Act of Parliament to such services, and he postponed the Mutiny Bill till February 23, when the old Act would be not far from its expiration. Resolution after resolution was also carried censuring the ministers, the circumstances of their appointment, and their retention of office. The whole odium, therefore, of postponing a dissolution rested with the Opposition, while the Government obtained all the advantage of the delay.

Pitt, on the other hand, acted with marvellous skill and with a constant view to the great public beyond the walls. The death of Sir Edward Walpole placed at this time at his disposal the rich sinecure of Clerk of the Pells, with an income of at least 3,000*l.* a year.[1] It had always been customary for statesmen who possessed only small private means to secure their independence by the acquisition of such sinecures, and as Pitt's private income was at this time not more than 300*l.* a year, and as it seemed probable that he would in a few weeks be thrown out of office, he would, according to the custom of the time, have been perfectly justified in appointing himself. Ambition, however, not money, was the passion of his life, and he clearly saw that he might make a use of this office, which would greatly assist him in the struggle. One of the gravest reproaches that had been directed against the Rockingham and Shelburne Ministry had been the pension of about 3,000*l.* a year which they had bestowed upon Barré, at a time when they were loudly professing their zeal for economical

[1] There is some doubt about the exact income. See Jesse's *Geo. III.* ii. 457.

reform. Pitt now gave the Clerkship of the Pells to Barré, on condition of his resigning this pension, which was accordingly saved to the public.

No sacrifice was ever more amply repaid. From this time the personal disinterestedness of Pitt and his complete freedom from every kind of corruption were never seriously questioned. The magnanimity of his conduct came home to men of all classes and opinions, and it excited a transport of enthusiasm in that great public which was now keenly watching the course of the unequal fight.

The House of Commons had resolved that it was indispensably necessary that immediate measures should be taken for the reform of the Indian Government, and Pitt speedily responded to the demand. As early as January 14 he introduced in a very able speech his own plan. He proposed to establish in England a Board of Control, which was to control the policy of the Court of Directors, to possess a veto upon its nominations, and to institute prosecutions against great offenders, and also a tribunal sitting in England with large powers of trying Indian offences. No patronage was to be vested in the controlling board, and therefore the principal argument directed against Fox's Bill was not applicable to the new measure. Fox at once attacked it furiously, as inadequate, and on January 23 it was thrown out ; but it was a significant fact that the majority against the Government on this question was only 8. Fox then rose to propose again his own measure, but first called upon Pitt to say whether the House would be allowed to discuss it, or whether it would be interrupted by a dissolution. Pitt remained obstinately silent, and a scene of furious recrimination ensued. Member after member of the Opposition rose and questioned him as to his intentions. Conway, with a very unusual violence, denounced 'the sulky silence' of the ministers,

and declared that 'they existed by corruption, and were now about to dissolve Parliament after sending their agents round the country to bribe men.' A scene of unparalleled excitement continued till two o'clock on Saturday morning, and the House met again that day at twelve. All that could be extorted from the minister was that he would not prevent the House from meeting on Monday.

It was supposed that a dissolution would have immediately taken place. If any additional reason was required for a step which was so plainly constitutional, it was furnished by the rejection of the ministerial Bill for the government of India. The King strongly recommended this course;[1] but Pitt determined to prolong the contest, and for a few more weeks to exhibit to the nation the spectacle of a young statesman struggling with splendid courage and eloquence against overwhelming odds, and of an Opposition passionately deprecating and denouncing an appeal to the electors. On January 26 he stated that 'in the present situation of affairs he thought a dissolution could not but be attended with great detriment and disadvantage, and therefore he would not advise any such exercise of the prerogative.'

The statement was not a constitutional one unless it were followed by an immediate resignation, but the attitude of the Opposition prevented it from doing any harm. The contest still continued, but several things occurred to encourage Pitt. The King, who had refused to make a single peer during the Coalition Government, marked his sentiments publicly by creating four on the recommendation of Pitt. The House of Lords on February 4 passed resolutions by a majority of nearly two to one censuring the House of Commons for attempting of their own authority to suspend the law, and

[1] See his letters to Pitt, Stanhope's *Life of Pitt*, i., Appendix, iv. v.

interfere with the royal prerogative in the appointment of ministers. In the House of Commons itself there were manifest signs of wavering and division in the majority. On January 26 nearly seventy members met at St. Alban's Tavern[1] to discuss the possibility of ending the contest by a compromise. Without intermitting the contest in the House of Commons, a negotiation continued between the two sides for about three weeks, and the King was even induced to direct the Duke of Portland to meet Pitt in order to confer upon the possibility of forming a new Administration 'on a wide basis and on a fair and equal footing,' but the chiefs on neither side appeared to have sincerely desired an amalgamation.

Fox indeed declared himself perfectly willing to serve with Pitt. He spoke of him personally in terms of honourable and generous eulogy. He stated that, provided Pitt would consent that the Government of India should be in England and should be permanent for at least a given number of years, Pitt might settle the question of Indian patronage as he pleased, and North, with whom Pitt refused to serve, most honourably declared that he would be no obstacle to union, and was perfectly willing to waive all claims to office. But the terms 'a wide basis' and 'an equal footing' presented obstacles which were insuperable. On the side of the ministry it was resolved that at least four of the present ministers, including Thurlow, should be admitted into the Cabinet, and Fox, whose main object was to exclude royal influence from that body, and who knew well that Thurlow was its most formidable and persevering representative, refused to consent. On the other hand, Fox was fully determined to vindicate

[1] *Annual Register*, 1784, p. 87. Russell's *Life of Fox*, ii. 70. Lord Stanhope says the Independents were fifty-three, *Life of Pitt*, i. 184.

the Constitution by insisting on the resignation of the existing ministry as a preliminary to negotiation. They had come into office by a violation of the Constitution which must not be suffered to succeed. They had maintained that the Crown might not only appoint, but persist in upholding, a ministry in which the House of Commons had no confidence, and it was equally essential to the power and the honour of the House that this doctrine should not be suffered to acquire the stamp and authority of a precedent. 'The influence by which the present minister had seized the reins of power,' said Fox, 'can only be discussed subsequent to the resignation of the ministers. Surely the House can never forget that the present contest is not against men, but against ministers unconstitutionally called to office. It was the systematic influence of an undue tendency that he had ever struggled against, and would continue to struggle against.' The India Bill, said North, is out of the way, and my own pretensions are out of the way; and on what ground can ministers insist on their retention of office? Pitt, however, scornfully refused all suggestions of resignation. 'I will never,' he said, 'consent to march out with a halter about my neck; change my armour and meanly beg to be readmitted as a volunteer in the army of the enemy.' 'The immediate appointment or removal of ministers does not rest with this House. There is, therefore, nothing illegal in a minister's remaining in office after this House has declared against him, particularly when immediate resignation would have injured the country.'

Pitt afterwards qualified this assertion by an admission that no ministry could last which did not possess the confidence of the House, but the position he had assumed was a very perilous one. He hazarded also another doctrine which no English statesman would now maintain. In his later speeches he kept the contingency

of a dissolution completely out of sight; but he denied or questioned the right of the House of Commons to express a general want of confidence in ministers without specifying distinct charges, and he maintained that the House in condemning ministers just appointed by the Crown, before waiting for their measures, was violating the prerogative of the Sovereign to choose his ministers. 'Grant,' he said, 'that this House has a negative on the appointment of ministers, and you transplant the executive power to this House.' Where is even the safety of any one prerogative of the Crown, and even of the Crown itself, if its prerogative of naming ministers is usurped by this House, or if (which is precisely the same thing) its nomination of them is to be negatived by us without stating any one ground of distrust in the men, and without suffering ourselves to have any experience of their measures?'

This doctrine was implied in the resolutions of the House of Lords condemning the proceedings of the Commons, and it was on the ground that no charge or complaint had been suggested against his ministers that the King declined to accede to an address of the House of Commons asking for their removal. It is now generally admitted that under the English system of government this view is untenable. The House of Commons has a perfect right to withhold its confidence from ministers on account of the manner in which they have been called to office, and of their known characters, tendencies, or connections, and in this case ministers are constitutionally bound either to resign, or to submit the question with the shortest possible delay to the verdict of the constituencies. As Lord Loughborough said, 'It is the undoubted right of the Crown to name its own ministers; but the House of Lords or Commons have an equal right to advise his Majesty to dismiss them,' and numerous precedents

were adduced of resolutions of the House of Commons, since the Revolution, advising the Sovereign on the discretionary exercise of the prerogative of the Crown.[1]

But the error of Pitt seemed almost insignificant when compared with that of Fox, who denied the power of the Sovereign to dissolve Parliament in the middle of a session, who maintained that when the House of Commons is at variance with the other two branches of the Legislature, the opinion of the existing majority of the Commons should be at once decisive, and who tried to bar the way against an appeal to the people. He should have remembered that the usurpation by a majority of the House of Commons of a power beyond the Constitution and in opposition to the wishes of the people, was the question which during the whole of the Wilkes contest had inflamed and divided the English nation, and that if the question actually came to a dissolution, he was preparing for himself an inevitable defeat. He was staking everything on the desperate chance of driving Pitt from office without a dissolution, and even if he had succeeded in this attempt, he could not have prevented the King from recalling Pitt to his councils and dissolving Parliament as soon as the session had terminated.[2]

The violence of his language about the Crown was also irritating and alarming to the people, though there was undoubtedly much to palliate it. Fox well knew that he had risked his whole political reputation when he made his coalition with North, and that the sole justification of that measure would have been that it gave administration the strength, efficiency, and durability which had of late years been so lamentably wanting. He believed that he had succeeded, that a

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[1] Russell's *Life of Fox*, ii. 80, 87, 89.

[2] See Lord Russell's very judicious remarks.—*Correspondence of Fox*, ii. 245.

strong and permanent Government had been at last formed, and that the administrative anarchy and precariousness which had led to so many calamities was at an end. In the moment when the Government appeared most strong the King had overthrown it in a manner which was equally treacherous and unconstitutional. The received doctrine that the King can do no wrong could hardly apply to this contest. That the existing ministry owed its being to a personal and grossly unconstitutional interference of the King was a fact which, though it was not openly stated or formally proved, was too notorious to be questioned. The men who were concerned in the transaction were well known, they were present in Parliament, and they never denied it. Neither the present nor the past ministry had been authorised to contradict it. Every politician knew that the interference of the Sovereign during the debate in the House of Lords was the efficient cause of the change of ministry. The King in the eyes of Fox was the true culprit. The extinction of his influence in Parliament was the main end to be attained, and the destruction of a ministry which owed its origin to that influence was therefore indispensably necessary. It was a matter of the first constitutional importance to establish that the King had no right to interfere with the debates of either House of Parliament, that no Government could subsist in England without the confidence of the representative body, that the House of Commons had a substantial negative on the appointment of ministers. It was an unexampled thing for a sovereign of the House of Brunswick to declare his intention of keeping his ministers in office in defiance of repeated resolutions and of two formal addresses of the House of Commons. Every preceding sovereign and every preceding minister had bowed at once before the censure of the House. In order to find precedents for the conduct of the King and

his ministers it was necessary to go back to the Stuarts, and there was great danger that the weight and importance of the popular branch of the Legislature in the scale of the Constitution should be permanently depressed. At the same time Fox had himself been guilty of a great violation of constitutional decorum when as a minister of the Crown he had supported what was virtually a vote of censure on the Crown, and his scarcely veiled invectives against the Sovereign recoiled upon himself. The creation of four peers during the struggle showed the King's approval of his ministers, but it was within the incontestable prerogative of the Sovereign, and it ought not to have been attacked in the House of Commons.

It was soon evident that the prospect of driving Pitt from office without a dissolution must be abandoned. His courage was fully proof against all attacks, and Fox did not dare to use the only means that would have been efficacious. A short Mutiny Act and the stopping of Supplies would make it necessary for the ministers to yield unless they were prepared to throw the whole country into confusion. These measures were seriously contemplated. The Supplies were for a short time postponed, and the Mutiny Act was again put off, though only for a few days; but the country gentry were not prepared to press matters to extremities, and Fox himself did not desire it. 'His Majesty,' he said, 'has undoubtedly the power of choosing his own ministers, and the House of Commons of assigning the Supplies. But were the one to take into his service any men or set of men most agreeable to the royal inclination without any regard as to how such appointments might operate on the public, might not the House with the same propriety withhold the purse of the people?' He added, however, that 'both extremes ought to be avoided, because equally injurious to the public welfare.' Such

measures are, indeed, what Burke termed the 'extreme medicine of the State,' and nothing but the strongest possible popular support could have either justified or carried them. But it was already evident that popular support had gone from Fox. Loyal addresses began to pour in from the chief cities in the kingdom thanking the King for dismissing his late ministers and expressing confidence in Pitt. The Corporation and the merchants and traders of London led the way. The freedom of the City was presented to Pitt amid an outburst of passionate enthusiasm. The deep roar of popular indignation against the Opposition grew louder and louder, and its influence was soon felt within the House. The representatives of the great towns who had hitherto supported Fox began to fall away. The majorities rapidly dwindled. The idea of passing a Mutiny Bill for only a month so as to make the continuation of Parliament necessary was thrown out, but it was so coldly received that Fox did not venture to press it. At last, on March 8, Fox moved a representation to the King, drawn up with great skill by Burke, and embodying the whole case of the Opposition. After a debate of some hours the House divided, and it was found that the Opposition had only triumphed by a single vote. There were 191 votes for the representation, and 190 against it.

This vote decided the contest. A Mutiny Bill for the usual period of a year was carried. The usual Supplies were soon voted, though not appropriated. On March 24 the King summoned the Commons to the House of Lords, and apprised them of his determination to call a new Parliament, and on the following day the Parliament was actually dissolved.

No party ever went to the constituencies more hopelessly foredoomed to ruin than the Opposition which followed the banner of Fox and of North, and it is not

difficult to trace the causes of its disaster. The first great cause lay in the fatal error of the Coalition. It had offended bitterly the most ardent followers of both leaders, and had at once alienated the enthusiasm of the Tories and of the Whigs. In the emphatic words of Bishop Watson: 'It left the country without hope of soon seeing another respectable Opposition on constitutional grounds, and it stamped on the hearts of millions an impression, which will never be effaced, that patriotism is a scandalous game played by public men for private ends, and frequently little better than a selfish struggle for power.'[1] There had been large classes in the country who were ardently attached to Fox as the great opponent of the American war, of political corruption, and of the encroachments of royal power. There had been other great classes who were not less attached to North as a statesman of a singularly stainless and attractive private character, who had laboured under overwhelming difficulties to maintain the unity of the Empire, and the conservative elements of the Constitution. But no class felt any enthusiasm for Fox when allied with North, or for North when allied with Fox, and the confidence of the nation had ebbed away. The support of the party was now little more than a languid acquiescence, and the coalition of the leaders who had been so bitterly opposed was very generally attributed to mere personal pique and to a corrupt desire for place and power.

The judgment, as we have seen, was not a just one; but it was at least very natural, and it was no less natural that every measure which emanated from such a coalition should have been harshly and suspiciously judged. It would have been scarcely possible for the ministers to have amended the terms of peace, but when they consented to sign definitive articles which were

[1] *Anecdotes of his Life*, i. 172.

nearly identical with the preliminary articles they had so lately denounced as inadequate and dishonourable, this appeared to the public a clear confirmation of the unfavourable opinion which had been originally formed. The India Bill was a great and honest measure intended to remedy great and crying evils, but the public were easily persuaded that its real object was to destroy the power of the King, and by vesting an enormous patronage in the hands of an oligarchy to govern the Parliament by corruption. It is not probable, however, that this view would have resisted the test of a prolonged discussion, and if the dissolution had taken place immediately after the unconstitutional interference of the King, it is very possible that the Opposition might have won. They would then have stood on strong and popular ground, and the recent proceeding would have been a striking example of that royal interference with Parliament which it had been the object of the coalition to make impossible. But when Fox, in an ill-omened hour, pledged his party to resist dissolution, when he made it the main object of his policy to prevent the question at issue being brought before the judgment of the constituencies, his ultimate success became impossible. Tory and Whig were equally offended, the first by the attempt to deprive the Sovereign of one of his most undoubted prerogatives, the second by the attempt to withdraw the decision from the people, and to claim for the majority of the existing House of Commons a power which was at least as unconstitutional as that which the House had claimed in the Wilkes contest.

And while the Opposition appeared thus to unite the faults and the unpopularity of Whig and Tory, the young minister who was at the helm combined the merits and commanded the enthusiasm of both parties. In the eyes of the Tories he was the favoured minister

of the King, who had come forward to free his Sovereign from an odious tyranny, to defend his influence and his prerogative from most formidable and most insidious attacks. The Whigs, on the other hand, remembered that he had refused to hold any office in the same ministry as North ; that he was the ablest champion of parliamentary reform ; that he had endeavoured in vain to force this great question on the Coalition Ministry; that he had tried, though unsuccessfully, to carry a measure of economical reform against the wishes of that ministry ; that he was appealing to the people to decide the conflict which had arisen between the powers of the State ; that he had spoken as strongly as Fox himself of the necessity of suppressing corrupt royal influence in the House of Commons, and that he had never recanted a single word of what he had said. With a private character as stainless as that of North, with a public character wholly free from every imputation of corruption, he had the great advantage of being unconnected with the events of the American war. One of the leaders of the Coalition was considered more responsible than any other man for the long train of calamities which had resulted in the dismemberment and the humiliation of the Empire. The other had encouraged and sympathised with the Americans in every stage of their resistance, and had exulted in the disasters of his country.[1] Pitt alone of the three statesmen completely represented the national feeling. The aureole of his illustrious father encompassed him, and he had shown himself as yet fully worthy of the splendid

[1] Ten years after the conclusion of the American war, Fox in a letter to his nephew expressed his delight at the defeat of the Duke of Brunswick by the French in the battle of Valmy. 'No public event,' he wrote, '*not excepting Saratoga and Yorktown*, ever happened that gave me so much delight.'—Fox's *Correspondence*, ii. 372.

heritage of his name. The courage and the eloquence with which, when not yet twenty-five, he encountered almost single-handed one of the most powerful Oppositions ever known in England, fascinated multitudes who cared very little for party or politics, but who appreciated keenly the spectacle of an unequal fight most bravely and most skilfully fought. The spell which Pitt at this time threw over his countrymen continued unbroken to his death. It outlived years of discouragement and disaster, and it was scarcely weakened at a time when sagacious men had discovered that his powers as a legislator and administrator were by no means on a level with his almost unrivalled talent for managing a party, and for conducting a debate.

The result of a struggle waged under these conditions could hardly be doubtful. The King's friends, the East India Company, and all the classes that were most ardently Tory, were on the side of Pitt, and they were assisted by the Duke of Richmond, the advocate of universal suffrage; by Lord Effingham, and Dr. Price, the most vehement opponents of the American war; by Wilkes, who had himself fought a gallant fight against a majority in the House of Commons; by the great body of the Nonconformists, who had so long been the staunchest supporters of the Whig party; by the Yorkshire Association, and most of the supporters of parliamentary reform. The system of nomination boroughs at the disposal of great nobles made many seats inaccessible to the most violent fluctuations of public opinion, but in nearly every large constituency the strength of the torrent was felt. No fewer than 160 members, nearly all of them belonging to the Opposition, were driven from Parliament. Fox himself barely succeeded in retaining his seat for Westminster. The united Opposition was utterly shattered. The old

lines of party division were, for a time at least, submerged or effaced, and Pitt met the Parliament of 1784 at the head of a majority which made him the most powerful minister ever known in the parliamentary history of England.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE qualities of mind and character which in modern societies have proved most successful in political life are for the most part of a wholly different order from those which lead to eminence in the spheres of pure intellect or pure moral effort. Originality and profundity of thought, the power of tracing principles to their obscure and distant consequences, the intellectual and imaginative insight which penetrates to the heart of things and expresses in a perennial form the deeper emotions or finer shades of human character, can be of little or no service in practical politics. Nor are the moral qualities that are required in the highest spheres of statesmanship those of a hero or a saint. Passionate earnestness and self-devotion, complete concentration of every faculty on an unselfish aim, uncalculating daring, a delicacy of conscience and a loftiness of aim far exceeding those of the average of men, are here likely to prove rather a hindrance than an assistance. The politician deals very largely with the superficial and the commonplace; his art is in a great measure that of skilful compromise, and in the conditions of modern life the statesman is likely to succeed the best who possesses secondary qualities to an unusual degree, who is in the closest intellectual and moral sympathy with the average of the intelligent men of his time, and who pursues common ideals with more than common ability. 'The first quality of a prime minister in a free country,' said

Horace Walpole, 'is to have more common sense than any man.' Tact, business talent, knowledge of men, resolution, promptitude and sagacity in dealing with immediate emergencies, a character which lends itself easily to conciliation, diminishes friction and inspires confidence, are especially needed, and they are more likely to be found among shrewd and enlightened men of the world than among men of great original genius or of an heroic type of character.

In a free country and under a parliamentary government the qualities required for a great statesman differ widely from those which are needed under a despotism, and they are so various and dissimilar that no one has ever possessed them all in an extraordinary degree. The talent of an orator or debater who can carry his measures triumphantly through parliamentary controversies; the talent of a tactician skilful in the difficult art of party management; the talent of an administrator who can conduct the ordinary business of the country with vigour and sagacity; the constructive talent which, when a great change has to be accomplished, can carry it out by wise and well-conceived legislation; the political prescience which foresees the effect of measures, understands the tendencies of the time and directs and modifies a policy in accordance with them, must all meet in an ideal statesman. He must preserve the happy medium between arrogance and irresolution, between rashness and timidity, under circumstances that are peculiarly fitted to bring either failing into relief. Widely different talents are required for a minister in time of peace and in time of war, and the qualities of mind and character that exercise the most powerful magnetic influence over great masses of men are not always those that win the confidence of parliaments or statesmen. It is possible for a man to be immeasurably superior to his fellows in eloquence, in

knowledge, in dexterity of argument, in moral energy and in popular sympathy, and at the same time plainly inferior to the average of educated men in soundness and sobriety of judgment. The best man of business is not always the most enlightened statesman, and a great power of foreseeing and understanding the tendencies of his time may be combined with a great incapacity for managing men or for dealing with daily difficulties as they arise.

By the natural limitations of human nature some of these gifts of statesmanship are sure to be wanting in the greatest minister, and experience shows that the extraordinary possession of one of them is often balanced by a more than common deficiency in another. No English statesman conducted the affairs of the nation at home and abroad, for a considerable period, more skilfully or more prosperously than Walpole. His administration probably saved England from a prolonged period of disputed succession and gave her the strength that carried her through subsequent wars, but he undoubtedly lowered the moral tone of public life, and he scarcely left a trace of constructive statesmanship on the statute book. Chatham possessed to the highest degree the power of command and the qualities that appeal to the enthusiasm of a nation. He was one of the greatest of orators, one of the greatest of war ministers, and his general views of policy often exhibited a singular genius and sagacity; but he had scarcely any talent for internal administration, and he was utterly incapable of party management. Peel far surpassed all his contemporaries in the masterly skill and comprehensiveness with which he could frame his legislative measures and in the commanding knowledge and ability with which he could carry them through Parliament; his speeches are full of wide and sagacious surveys of the whole field of politics, and in the department of

finance Huskisson was the only statesman of his generation who could be looked upon as his rival; but he showed so little of the prescience of a statesman that on the three most important questions of his day—the questions of Catholic Emancipation, Parliamentary Reform, and Free Trade—his mistakes were disastrous to his country and almost ruinous to his party; and, although he appeared for a time one of the greatest of parliamentary leaders, he left his party dislocated, impotent, and discredited. His rival, Lord John Russell, took a foremost part in that Reform Bill which is perhaps the most important legislative measure of the nineteenth century, and a considerable part in many other measures of almost the highest value. His political judgment on the chief events of his time was so sound, moderate, and sagacious that there was scarcely an opinion of his youth which he was obliged to abandon in old age, and scarcely a line of policy which he suggested that has not been justified by the event. Though not an orator, he succeeded both as leader of the House of Commons and as leader of the Opposition. He was courageous, earnest, transparently straightforward and honourable, but yet he can scarcely be called either a brilliant, a powerful, or a very popular statesman. A want of tact and management, an imperfect knowledge of men, a curious strain of party pedantry which showed itself in his speeches and judgments, an undue restlessness and independence when co-operating with other statesmen, impaired his influence both with his colleagues and with the country.

The most remarkable of all instances of the combination of the more dazzling attributes of a parliamentary statesman is to be found in the young minister whose triumph at the election of 1784 has been described in the last chapter. His position at this moment was one of the most enviable and most extraordinary in

history. He was but just twenty-five, an age when talents, knowledge, and character are with most men completely immature and when a politician who entered Parliament with great advantages is considered very fortunate if he has attained the rank of Under Secretary and has on a few occasions caught the ear of the House. At this age Pitt had attained a parliamentary ascendency which his father had scarcely rivalled. He had fought, with an eloquence, courage, and sagacity which excited the admiration of the whole nation, one of the most desperate parliamentary battles in English history, and he had totally defeated an Opposition consisting of the majority of the House of Commons, and directed by a group of statesmen and orators of the very highest eminence. The victory at the hustings had been decisive. Pitt found himself at the head of a majority which represented the undoubted sentiments of the country. He had no colleagues who could for a moment rival his influence, and by a strange combination of circumstances he came to power unpledged as to his policy, and supported by a great section of each party in the State.

It was an extraordinary position, and it soon appeared that Pitt had both the talents and the character to maintain it. With one brief interval he continued to be Prime Minister of England till his death. For nearly nineteen years he was as absolute as Walpole in the Cabinet and the Parliament, far more powerful than Walpole from his hold upon the affections and admiration of the people.

Such a statesman may have had great defects, but he must have had extraordinary merits, and before proceeding with the course of our narrative it may be well to attempt in one comprehensive picture to form a general estimate of both.

His first and most conspicuous talent was that of an

orator or debater. The son of the greatest of English orators, he was destined almost from the cradle for a parliamentary career, and the whole force and bent of his intellect was ceaselessly employed in this one direction. His father was accustomed to make him practise declamation when still a child, and to give him facility and flexibility of language by making him translate at sight from classical and modern foreign writers, attending rather to the force, flow, and elegance of the language than to exact fidelity of translation. At Cambridge it was noticed how minutely he applied himself to the study of language, how carefully in reading the classical writers he analysed their style, noted down every forcible or happy expression, and especially compared the opposite speeches on the same subject, observing how each speaker managed his own case, and how he answered or evaded the case of his opponents. In mathematics and in Locke's philosophy he found an admirable discipline for his reasoning powers, and it was remembered that Barrow's sermons were recommended by Chatham as specially fitted to purify and invigorate his style. He was a hard student, but there was nothing in his studies that was desultory or aimless. Though he entered Parliament at twenty-one he had already been long accustomed to haunt the galleries of both Houses during important debates, and it was his practice while each speech was proceeding to consider how it could be answered and how it could be improved. By such methods he acquired what Coleridge has truly called 'a premature and unnatural dexterity in the combination of words,' a power of pouring forth with endless facility perfectly modulated sentences of perfectly chosen language, which as far surpassed the reach of a normal intellect as the feats of an acrobat exceed the capacities of a normal body.

He had, indeed, every requisite of a great debater:

perfect self-possession; an unbroken flow of sonorous and dignified language; great quickness and cogency of reasoning and especially of reply; an admirable gift of lucid and methodical statement; an extraordinary skill in arranging the course and symmetry of an unpremeditated speech; a memory singularly strong and singularly accurate. No one knew better how to turn and retort arguments, to seize in a moment on a weak point or an unguarded phrase, to evade issues which it was not convenient to press too closely, to conceal if necessary his sentiments and his intentions under a cloud of vague, brilliant, and imposing verbiage. Without either the fire, passion, imagination, or histrionic power of his father, he could entrance the House by his sustained and lofty declamation or invective, and he employed with terrible effect the weapon of cutting sarcasm and the tone of freezing contempt. Good judges complained of a 'great monotony in his intonations, an absence of variety in his gesture, an ungraceful habit of sawing the air with his body,' but he had a noble voice, clear, powerful and melodious, and there was about him an unvarying dignity and even majesty of manner which always reminded men that he was speaking with the authority of a great minister.

Those who read his speeches will derive little from them but disappointment. What especially strikes the reader is their extreme poverty of original thought. They are admirably adapted for their immediate purpose, but beyond this they are almost worthless. It has been said with truth that not one philosophical remark, not one image, not even one pointed aphorism out of them has been remembered.[1] There is not a trace in them of the wide or subtle political views, the exquisite

[1] See the severe but admirably acute and powerful essay on Pitt by Coleridge (*Essays on his Own Times*, ii. 319–329).

delineations of character, the deep insight into the springs of human feeling and action which make the speeches of Burke so invaluable. Burke once described Pitt with much bitterness as 'the sublime of mediocrity,'[1] and it is true that with all his great powers his mind seemed always to move in the region of the commonplace. It was said by his admirers that his thoughts clothed themselves almost spontaneously in the most appropriate and felicitous language, but we look in vain for those far-reaching, vivid, and imaginative epithets and phrases which in the speeches of his father, of Burke, and sometimes of Grattan, at once arrest the attention, and open, as with a sudden flash, new vistas to the mind. Hardly any other great speaker was so little remembered, and the few phrases which are not forgotten are only instances of the happy expression of perfectly commonplace ideas. Thus, when Erskine in a feeble speech repeated arguments which had been more powerfully stated by Fox, Pitt began his reply, 'The honourable and learned gentleman who succeeded the right honourable gentleman, *attenuating the thread of his discourse*.' When his health was drunk as the saviour of Europe, Pitt loftily disclaimed the compliment: 'Europe is not to be saved by any single man. England has saved herself by her exertions, and will, I trust, save Europe by her example.'

To a good writer who knows that the supreme end of his art is to give language the utmost meaning of which it is susceptible, to make it reveal and distinguish with accuracy and with clearness the finest fibres of thought, few styles can be more repulsive than the style of Pitt. Redundant and copious beyond measure, a commonplace thought is beaten out into period after period, piled one on another with a monotonous and

[1] Butler's *Reminiscences*, p. 172.

architectural symmetry, and with a manifest desire to produce the greatest possible pomp and parade of language. Though an admirable reasoner, Pitt was, in this respect, scarcely equal to Fox. We miss the firm grasp, the extreme fairness which stated in the strongest form the strongest argument of an opponent, the close contact with the reality of things. High-sounding generalities, a kind of vague grandiloquence which seemed to indicate a mind less occupied with facts than with the presentation of facts, bore a large part in his speeches, and, never stooping to the familiar, he often failed to touch the definite and the concrete. Francis, who was a very acute though a very prejudiced and malevolent critic, maintained that Pitt's eloquence was more fit for declamation than for debate, and he would allow him no merit except a perfect elocution, a sonorous voice, and astonishing choice and fluency of language, which, however, wholly failed to fix itself on the memory.[1] Windham, who was an equally competent and a less prejudiced judge, spoke of Pitt's 'State Paper style,' and expressed his belief that 'he could speak a King's Speech off-hand.' It was generally acknowledged that he was superior to Fox in method and arrangement, in skill of statement, in the more uniform and equable elevation of his language. It was remarked by the excellent critics in the reporters' gallery, that it was often difficult to follow the train or sequence of Fox's speeches, but that there was no difficulty in remembering what he said. Pitt's speeches, on the other hand, were perfect in their method, and it was easy and delightful to follow them; but when the musical voice had ceased, it was not always so easy to remember what had charmed.[2]

The canons of writing and of speaking are, however,

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[1] Parkes and Merivale's *Life of Francis*, ii. 469, 470.

[2] Butler's *Reminiscences*, p. 160.

essentially different, and the best justification of Pitt's rhetoric is the enormous impression which, during so many years, and on so many subjects, it scarcely ever failed to make on a highly educated audience. Reporting in his day was far from perfect,[1] and even the most perfect reporting can never adequately convey the power and charm of a great orator. Lord Holland has said that those who had heard the debates of Pitt and Fox in the House of Commons had 'heard the art of public and unpremeditated speaking in as great perfection as human faculties exercised in our language can attain;'[2] and we have some measure of their greatness in the comparisons that were made between them and the most illustrious of their successors. Chateaubriand, having attended the debates of the House of Commons when an exile during the French Revolution, returned to London as ambassador at a time when Canning and Grey were in the zenith of their powers, and he has left a most emphatic testimony to the great decadence that had

[1] Lord Grenville mentioned to Rogers the great injustice which reporting did to the speeches of Pitt. He said that there were only two speeches—that on the Sinking Fund, and that on the answer to Bonaparte's letter to George III.—corrected by Pitt himself. Rogers's *Recollections*, pp. 188–190. To these speeches that on the Union must be added (Stanhope's *Life of Pitt*, iii. 172). Perhaps his greatest speech was that on the renewal of the war in 1803, of which Fox finely said that 'if Demosthenes had been present he must have admired and might have envied.' Horner says of it: 'Pitt's peroration was a complete half-hour of his most powerful declamation, not lowered in its tone for a moment; not a particle of all this is preserved in the report lately published, though said to be done by Canning.'—*Horner's Life*, i. p. 221. A writer in the *Annual Register* remarks: 'It is unjust to lean too much on particular words and phrases attributed to the members of either House. Our public reports of proceedings in Parliament are not sufficiently accurate for such a purpose.'—*An. Reg.* 1791, p. 112. This ought to be remembered when forming a judgment of the almost insane language that was often attributed to Burke, who was a very rapid speaker.

[2] Holland's *Memoirs of the Whig Party*, ii. 38.

taken place,[1] and Wilberforce only pronounced what appears to have been the almost universal judgment when he asserted that, as an orator or debater, Canning, in his most brilliant days, belonged to an altogether lower plane than the two great rivals who had preceded him.[2]

Pitt is said to have himself defended the extreme redundance of his speeches, on the ground that he preferred it to the repetitions of Fox, and that one or other is absolutely necessary for any speaker who would thoroughly and adequately impress his views on a popular audience.[3] The difference between the reasoning of the two orators was, no doubt, partly due to difference of intellectual character, but partly also to the fact that Fox was nearly always in opposition, while Pitt was nearly always in office. In a parliamentary government a minister is constantly obliged to speak when it would be better to keep silence, and it must be one of his most frequent objects to avoid disclosing his opinions and intentions, to evade questions which cannot be safely brought to an immediate issue, to keep open to himself more than one course of action, to secure the concurrence of men of more than one shade of opinion. When a great master of language finds himself in such a position, he will naturally learn to cultivate a style of eloquence adapted to its exigencies. He will often very deliberately substitute words for things, avoid rather than aim at precision, and employ language for the purpose of obscuring rather than defining thought. Such a mode of speaking seldom fails to exercise a pernicious influence both on intellect and character, but it must be judged, like other things, by its adaptation to its end, and not by mere literary tests.

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[1] See a remarkable passage in his *Essai sur la Littérature Anglaise*, ii. 239, 240.

[2] *Wilberforce's Life*, v. 340.

[3] Gifford.

Pitt had an unlimited command of this kind of rhetoric. He had, also, to a very remarkable degree, the inestimable gift of reticence, a gift which is rarely united with so great a wealth of words. No speaker was more difficult to provoke to a reply when an obstinate or a dignified silence was most conducive to his interest.[1] His self-control was almost unfailing, and he had a most rapid and intuitive sagacity in reading the temper both of the House and of the public. He had a good political judgment, but, beyond all things, a most excellent House of Commons judgment. The House seemed perpetually before his mind, and Windham complained with truth that in preparing his measures he thought less of their operation than of their reception,, and especially of the manner in which they would look in a parliamentary statement.[2] There have been wiser statesmen, and there have been greater orators, but no other English minister was so skilled in the management alike of a party and of a debate, in the art of knowing how far questions might be pressed without danger or compromised without discredit. Amid the passion and provocation of debate, in sittings that were prolonged till the streaks of morning had begun to illuminate the horizon, at times when a thousand cares unconnected with the immediate subject of discussion were weighing on his mind, at times when great public dangers were impending, and when the interests of the nation were shamefully subordinated to party passions, he scarcely ever lost his self-command or his dignity, his supreme good sense, or his authority over the House. Burke, who was in some respects an immeasurably greater man, often emptied the House by his discur-

[1] I have noticed (*supra*, pp. 247, 248) how eminently he displayed this gift in the great contest of 1783–1784. For a later example see Wraxall's *Posthumous Memoirs*, iii. 354.

[2] *Horner's Life*, i. 315.

siveness, and excited ridicule or disgust by extravagances of passion, taste, and metaphor, which seemed scarcely compatible with sanity. Fox, in intellectual powers, was probably fully equal to Pitt, but through his whole political life the indiscretion and violence of some of his own speeches were the chief obstacles to his career. But the young minister, in the moments of his most vehement declamation, was always essentially calm and collected, and his complete mastery over himself was one of the great secrets of his influence over others.

Like William III., to whom in character he bore some resemblance, he was more wonderful as a very young man than as a man of mature life. Intellect and character with him had both developed prematurely, and acquired their full force at an age when with other men they are in the bud. As was inevitable, however, such a development was somewhat onesided. It was truly said of him that he never was a boy, and, owing to the strange circumstances of his life, he knew very little of men or manners except as they were exhibited in political life, and seen through the unnatural medium of a great ministerial position. His knowledge of public opinion, and especially of parliamentary opinion, was rarely at fault, but he had not much skill in discriminating individual character, and little knowledge of common life.[1]

In the noble portraits of him which Gainsborough has left, it is not, I think, difficult to detect an expression of purity and almost of unworldliness as of one who had never succumbed to the chief temptations of youth. Natural shyness, weak health, and a home education strengthened this purity of nature, but contributed also to the stiffness and awkwardness of his manner. His

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[1] See *Horner's Life*, i. 315, 316. Wilberforce's *Life*, ii. 92, 93. *Bland Burges Papers*, p. 87.

indifference to female charms was the constant subject of coarse taunts which exhibit only too clearly the fashionable morals of the time. Neither play, nor the turf, nor the theatre could allure him, and no pleasure was ever suffered to divert him from the paths of ambition and of public duty.[1]

In one point alone could his private character be justly assailed. It is said that when a boy, being very weak, his physician ordered him large quantities of port wine, and he was accustomed to employ the same means to sustain his strength and spirits during political conflict. Grenville related how he had seen him swallow a whole bottle of port in tumblerfuls before going down to the House, and, although his power of bearing wine was very great, yet towards the end of his life his shaking hand and his bloated features indicated plainly the excess which was undermining his constitution. This vice was shared by probably the majority of the statesmen who were his contemporaries. His friend Dundas was especially addicted to it, and it is related that on one occasion neither statesman was in a condition to answer an attack in the House of Commons. But with this single exception there is, I believe, no evidence that Pitt's excessive drinking was ever suffered, in public life, to obscure the clearness of his intellect or to impair the cold and commanding dignity of his manner.[2]

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[1] Wilberforce noticed 'the intense earnestness' which Pitt on one occasion displayed when joining in some games of chance, but he adds, 'He perceived their increasing fascination, and soon after suddenly abandoned them for ever.'—*Life*, i. 18.

[2] See Wraxall's *Historical Memoirs*, ii. 472–474; Rogers's *Recollections*; Lady Minto's *Life of Sir G. Elliot*, i. 189. Several particulars on the subject collected from various quarters will be found in Timbs's *Century of Anecdotes*, i. 50, 51. A number of epigrams were written about the one occasion on which he was unable to speak. The best is said to be the following:

'*Pitt.* I cannot see the Speaker! Hal, can you?

'*Dundas.* Not see the Speaker? Hang it! I see two.'

His integrity was not only unquestionable but unquestioned. We have already seen how, when his political position was most precarious, and when he had scarcely any private means, he gave the rich sinecure of Clerk of the Pells to Colonel Barré instead of retaining it for himself. In 1788, during the debates on the Regency, when it appeared likely that he would be at once obliged to retire from office and to seek a livelihood at the bar, some bankers and other rich men of London agreed to offer him a free gift of 100,000*l.*, but he peremptorily refused to accept it.[1] His indifference to money matters amounted indeed to a fault. He held the two offices of First Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer, and in 1792 the King insisted on conferring on him the Wardenship of the Cinque Ports, thus raising his official income to at least 10,000*l.* a year; yet, though he had no expensive tastes, through simple negligence of his private affairs and the unchecked dishonesty and extravagance of his servants he was soon overwhelmed with debt. In 1801 his friends raised 12,000*l.* to relieve him from his most pressing debts.

For mere honorary distinctions he cared as little as for money. Though he distributed peerages with a lavish and culpable profusion he never desired one for himself, and he declined the blue ribbon when it was offered him. To lead the House of Commons, to wield the energies of England, was his one passion, and the whole force of his mind and character was devoted to it. His tall, slender figure, habitually drawn up to its utmost height, his head thrown back, his fixed and abstracted gaze, the repelling stiffness of his bow, his pale face, which seemed nearly always when in repose to wear an expression of forbidding sternness or of supercilious

[1] Stanhope's *Life of Pitt*, ii. 16, 17.

disdain, and which could darken at times with a peculiar and domineering fierceness, all indicated a man who was more fitted to command than to attract. The unbending stateliness of his public manner and diction would have been indeed intolerable to a popular assembly of English gentlemen had it not been united with a singular soundness and moderation of judgment, with great calmness of temper and with transcendent powers of eloquence and command. He was popular in the House, but it was the kind of popularity which a great general always enjoys among his soldiers when they have an unbounded confidence in his skill. The House of Commons, as Bolingbroke once said, 'like a pack of hounds, grows fond of the man who shows them game and by whose halloo they are used to be encouraged.'

No statesman was, however, more destitute of some of the qualities that generally lead to popularity, and it is evident from the correspondence of his contemporaries how often he galled the self-respect or the vanity of those with whom he came in contact. 'I know the coldness of the climate you go into,' wrote Shelburne to one who was about to have an interview with Pitt, 'and that it requires all your animation to produce a momentary thaw.[1] 'This personage,' wrote Sir James Harris, who then knew Pitt only in his public capacity, 'is, I take it, composed of very hard materials, and there enters a good deal of marble into his composition.' Lord Carmarthen, when Secretary of State, was almost driven to resignation by the haughtiness with which Pitt compelled him, when unwell, to be present at a Court ceremony; and the 'hauteur' of his manner, the inattention, often amounting to discourtesy, with which he treated both his colleagues and his followers, was a frequent subject of complaint.[2] On the opposite side of the

[1] Fitzmaurice's *Life of Shelburne*, iii. 422.

[2] See *Malmesbury Correspondence*, ii, 257, 258. Bucking-

House this aspect of his character was naturally still more strongly felt, and Burke, in one of his confidential letters, speaks bitterly of 'this age when boys of twenty have got to the head of affairs and bear themselves with all the sour and severe insolence of sixty, and which even from sixty would be intolerable.'[1] In his speeches there was a total absence of the familiarity, the variety of tone, the happy illustrations, the flexibility and simplicity of Fox, and Pitt scarcely ever in public condescended to anything more nearly approaching a jest than an icy sarcasm. His relation to his party was quite unlike that of Fox and North. He stood cold, solitary, lofty, and inaccessible. Even the roll and splendour of his declamation, though it never failed to fascinate the House, had little genuine warmth and little power of moving the passions. It was a glow of language rather than of feeling, the glitter of the sunlight upon the snow.

Exaggerated pride and extreme avarice of power were the chief defects of such a character. Indomitable resolution was its great merit. It was said of him that, 'though his consummate judgment enabled him with singular felicity to avoid expressions necessarily productive of personal collision, he scarcely ever receded, apologised, or betrayed any apprehension of consequences.'[2] No statesman ever exhibited political courage in a higher degree than William Pitt. He showed it when as a young man of twenty-four he confronted the united powers of Fox, Burke, and Sheridan, supported by a large majority of the House of Commons. He showed it during the Regency Debates when it seemed, for a time, as if the whole fabric of his power

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ham's *Courts and Cabinets*, ii. 154. Rose's *Diary*, i. 131.

[1] Lady Minto's *Life of Sir G. Elliot*, i. 114. This was written in 1786.

[2] Wraxall, *Posthumous Memoirs*, ii. 345, 346.

was giving way, and he showed it not less conspicuously amid the accumulating misfortunes that clouded his last days. Whatever faults of strategy or administration he displayed in the conduct of the great French war, he at least never flinched or faltered; and he inspired with his own proud self-confidence both the Parliament and the country. The haughty spirit, however, which was never known to bend, was at last broken by the disasters of Ulm and Austerlitz, and the light which had so long guided the fortunes of England sank in a darkness which was not of the sunset but of the eclipse.

Such was Pitt as he appeared in public to the gaze of men. There was, however, another and a very different Pitt known to a few intimate friends. Baxter, in a remarkable page of his autobiography, has noticed that Cromwell, whose figure dominates so sternly and so grandly over the England of the Commonwealth, was 'naturally of such vivacity, hilarity, and alacrity, as another man hath when he has drunken a cup too much.' The same contrast between public and private life may be detected in the case of Pitt. When he was among the few whom he thoroughly trusted; when the reserve and the shyness he nearly always exhibited in the presence of strangers had passed away, he could cast aside both the cares and the dignity of office, and become one of the most charming and even one of the gayest companions. The wonderful quickness and the wonderful self-control which he exhibited in public life then took the form of the readiest but most inoffensive wit, and of a temper which was as amiable as it was imperturbable. 'He was,' said Wilberforce, 'the wittiest man I ever knew, and, what was quite peculiar to himself, had at all times his wit under entire control.'[1] 'His temper,' wrote George Rose, 'was, I think, the

[1] Wilberforce's *Life*, i. 18.

sweetest I ever knew.' 'The powerful energies of his character softened into the most perfect complacency and sweetness of disposition in the circles of private life, the pleasures of which no man ever more cheerfully enjoyed.'[1] 'He was endowed,' said Lord Wellesley, 'beyond any man of his time whom I knew, with a gay heart and a social spirit. . . . He was a most affectionate, indulgent, and benevolent friend, and so easy of access, that all his acquaintances in any embarrassment would rather resort to him for advice than to any person who might be supposed to have more leisure.'[2] 'He was,' said Lord Malmesbury, 'the most forgiving and easy-tempered of men.'[3]

Two kindred qualities which contribute greatly to lighten the burdens of public life he possessed to a remarkable degree. The courage with which he was so pre-eminently endowed was always sustained and coloured by a strong hopefulness. 'He was,' Addington was accustomed to say, 'the most sanguine man I ever knew,'[4] and those who will study his letters during some of the most critical periods of his life will hardly fail to be struck with the truth of the saying. He had also to a rare degree the inestimable gift of turning the current of his thoughts, and casting aside the pressure of care. It is one of the powers in which men differ the most, and one of those which contribute most largely to the happiness and usefulness of life. It is essentially physical, and with Pitt it was, no doubt, closely connected with that singular capacity for long, deep, and unbroken sleep, which he retained in the most anxious periods of his life. On one occasion, after an unusual strain of labour and anxiety, he is

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[1] Rose's *Diary*, ii. 260, 289.
[2] Ibid. p. 294.
[3] *Diaries*, iv. 185.
[4] Pellew's *Life of Sidmouth*, i. 72.

said to have slept continuously for more than sixteen hours.[1]

Amid the accumulating calamities of his last years his temper, which had once been so gay and delightful, is said to have clouded,[2] but even till near the end there were times when he was more like a boisterous boy than a careworn statesman.

In 1804 Sir William Napier, the future historian of the Peninsular War, being then a boy of between eighteen and nineteen, stayed for some time with him at Putney, and he has left a most curious and graphic account of his host. Pitt usually returned to dinner somewhat exhausted, and drank the greater part of a bottle of port in a rapid succession of glasses, but when he had recovered his strength from this stimulant he ceased to drink. His conversation was then always gay, good-natured, humorous, and sparkling with amusing anecdotes. He liked boys, and could put them at once and completely at their ease, and he joined in their games not merely with condescension but with every appearance of genuine hilarity and delight. On one occasion, Lady Hester Stanhope, two boys of the Stanhope family, and Napier himself, determined to blacken Pitt's face with burnt cork, which he strenuously resisted, belabouring his assailants with a cushion. In the midst of the boisterous scene a servant announced that Lord Castlereagh and Lord Liverpool desired to see the Prime Minister on business. They were ushered into another room and the game still for some time continued, when Pitt said he must not keep the grandees any longer waiting; water and a towel were brought; the face of the minister was washed;

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[1] Wraxall, *Posthumous Memoirs*, ii. 317, 318. Stanhope's *Life of Pitt*, iii. 39.

[2] See the remarks of Lord Grenville, Rogers's *Recollections*, pp. 188, 189.

the basin was hid under a sofa, and his two colleagues were admitted. Napier was surprised at their deferential and almost obsequious manner, but much more at the sudden transformation that passed over Pitt. 'His tall, ungainly, bony figure seemed to grow to the ceiling, his head was thrown back, his eyes were fixed immovably,' and apparently completely regardless of those who were before him. He listened to what they had to say, answered them in curt cold sentences, 'and finally, with an abrupt, stiff inclination of the body, but without casting his eyes down, dismissed them. Then, turning to us with a laugh, caught up his cushions and renewed our fight.'[1]

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[1] Bruce's *Life of Sir W. Napier*, i. 28–32. Lord Holland also notices as one of the characteristics of Pitt 'his eye in the air.' He did not know Pitt in private life, but speaks of the conflicting accounts of his conversation. Some said it was 'occasionally playful in the extreme and always good-humoured and brilliant,' and some that it 'was either excessively childish or very sarcastic.'—*Memoirs of the Whig Party*, ii. 33, 42. The journals of Wilberforce abundantly show the high, and sometimes boisterous, spirits of Pitt, when among his intimate friends. Speaking of one visit to Wimbledon he says: 'We found one morning the fruits of Pitt's earlier rising, in the careful sowing of the garden beds with the fragments of a dress hat in which Ryder had overnight come down from the opera.'—Wilberforce's *Life*, i. 28. There was a strange story in 1784 or 1785 that one night three drunken horsemen galloped through a turnpike without paying the toll, and were fired at by the turnpike keeper. They were Pitt, Thurlow, and Dundas. According to another version, however, they knocked at the door of a farmer to ask their way, and were fired at as housebreakers. Compare Wraxall, *Hist. Mem.* ii. 473; *Auckland Correspondence*, i. 360; *The Rolliad*, p. 37; *Quarterly Review*, xiii. 211. Chateaubriand gives a vivid picture of Pitt as he appeared to a stranger: 'M. Pitt en habit noir, épée à poignée d'acier au côté, chapeau noir sous le bras, montait, enjambant deux ou trois marches à la fois. Il ne trouvait sur son passage que trois ou quatre émigrés désœuvrés; laissant tomber sur nous un regard dédaigneux, il passait, le nez au vent, la figure pâle. Ce grand financier n'avait aucun ordre chez lui; point d'heures réglées pour ses repas ou son sommeil, . . . mal vêtu,

It is impossible to read this account without remembering the theatrical attitude of superiority and excessive dignity which the elder Pitt was accustomed to assume in his intercourse with his colleagues and his subordinates. The son was not indeed, like the father, by nature a consummate actor. He was stiff and awkward in person and manner; his countenance had but little variety of expression, and his voice but little variety of tone, and he had no taste for ceremony and display. In private he was perfectly simple and unaffected, and in the life of country houses, which speedily discloses the superficial foibles of manner and temper, he appears always to have made a favourable impression.[1] But the repelling and frigid dignity of his public manner was exaggerated and overstrained, and if it grew in the first instance naturally out of his character and his position, it appears to have been sedulously maintained for the purpose of authority and command. Once and once only in his long career did his majestic self-control wholly fail. It was when the vote was carried which pronounced his old friend and colleague, Lord Melville, guilty of peculation. It was noticed that Pitt then drew the cocked hat which he was accustomed to wear, more deeply over his forehead; and some of his faithful friends gathered round him, to conceal from the triumphant Opposition the tears that were trickling down his cheek.[2]

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sans plaisir, sans passion, avide de pouvoir, il méprisait les honneurs et ne voulait être que William Pitt.'—*Essai sur la Littérature Anglaise.*

[1] George North, who met him at the country house of the Duke of Rutland at a time when party rancour was peculiarly strong, wrote that he was sorry to find that 'so bad a politician was so very pleasant a man.'—Lord Holland's *Mem. of the Whig Party*, i. 34. See, too, the *Malmesbury Diaries*, iv. 157. Lord Malmesbury described his manners in a country house as 'quite those of an accomplished idler.'—Ibid. p. 347.

[2] Ibid. p. 347.

We must now pass to the more difficult task of attempting to form an estimate of his character as a minister, remembering that for nearly nineteen years he exercised an almost absolute authority over both Houses of Parliament, and that for nearly nine of these years the country was at perfect peace.

There were, in the first place, some consequences arising from his ascendency which were in a great degree independent of the measures he introduced. We have seen that the nature of the Cabinet, and the relation of the First Lord of the Treasury to his colleagues, had long been unsettled questions in the British Constitution. According to one theory each minister is a servant of the Crown, responsible for his own department, and with little or no dependence on his colleagues. According to the other theory, the Cabinet is a strictly homogeneous body, and there is one minister whose special charge is to direct and give unity to its policy. It had been the manifest wish of the King to revive the former system, under which he could be the true director of the national policy, and in the first weak ministries of the reign the greatest divisions of opinion and of authority subsisted. Lord North, though personally extremely subservient to the King, had a greater ascendency in his own Cabinet than most of his predecessors, but he always disclaimed the title of Prime Minister as unknown to the Constitution.[1] But whatever name might be employed, there could be at least

[1] See an interesting letter from the daughter of Lord North to Brougham in the appendix of Brougham's *Statesmen of the Time of George III.* In 1741 a number of peers drew up a protest against the government of Walpole on the ground that 'a sole or even a first minister is an officer unknown to the law of Great Britain and inconsistent with the Constitution,' and that Sir R. Walpole had 'for many years acted as such by taking upon himself the chief, if not the sole, direction of affairs.'—Rogers's *Protests of the Lords*, ii. 10.

no question of the absolute authority which Pitt maintained over his colleagues. It was not that he did not permit, even to a culpable extent, open questions among men in office. It was not that the King did not exercise, during the whole course of his ministry, a constant advising influence over the policy of the Cabinet. On the questions, indeed, of parliamentary reform and of the impeachment of Hastings, Pitt adopted a line of policy very repugnant to the King, but in general he showed an evident desire to abstain from any course which might be in conflict with the royal wish. At the same time he was too strong a minister either to pursue a dictated policy or to tolerate cabals against his power, and the old system of a divided Cabinet, of 'King's friends' maintained in office for the purpose of controlling, and, if commanded, overthrowing their chief, now came finally and decisively to an end.

Justly confident in his name and in his talents, in the support of Parliament and of the country, and in the impossibility of replacing him, Pitt occupied a position wholly different from that of the early ministers of the reign. His tone towards the King was uniformly respectful but formal and distant, equally removed from the domineering arrogance of Grenville and Bedford, from the subservience of Bute and North, and from the spasmodic and emotional loyalty of Chatham. The King never appears to have bestowed on him the full favour which he once bestowed on Bute and North, but he concurred in the general lines of his policy; he was bound to him by a strong obligation of gratitude; he saw in him the only barrier against a Whig ascendency, and he was not insensible to the immense increase of his own popularity, which was a consequence of the popularity of his minister. The conduct of Pitt on the Regency question touched him more sensibly, and by a strange felicity it was at the same time in the highest

degree conducive to ministerial authority, for it established the doctrine that during the incapacity of the King the practical government of the country must devolve upon the minister.

In this manner the conflict of 1784, like many others in English history, ended in a compromise. The King had completely triumphed over the Coalition which he hated, and his popularity in the country was enormously increased, but the result of the conflict was to establish finally that system of ministerial authority which it had been the first great effort of his reign to overthrow. The gradual contraction of the governing powers of the English Sovereign is one of the most striking political facts of the eighteenth century, and I have accordingly devoted much space to it in the present work. The founders of the Revolution, though they intended to provide securities against a despotic monarchy, certainly never contemplated a cipher king, and as a matter of fact in all things relating to foreign policy William III. was the most powerful political influence in the country. The formation of a homogeneous Cabinet, which more than any other single cause diminished the royal power, was, as we have seen, not the result of any law or settled design, but was gradually and almost fortuitously effected through the exigencies of parliamentary government, and there had always been a school of politicians who believed that the King should exercise a more active directing influence in the affairs of the State. This had been the theory of Bolingbroke. It had been adopted by Pulteney and Carteret; it had for a time some attraction for Shelburne, and it was a leading article of the Toryism of Dr. Johnson. Whiggism, that vigorous thinker was accustomed to say, rested at the time of the Revolution on definite principles, but had degenerated in the early Hanoverian reigns into a mere system of stockjobbing, corruption, and monopoly. A few great

families who had accumulated a vast amount of borough patronage, and a rich and corrupt mercantile class which had acquired by bribery an ascendency in the chief towns, had got possession of the government of the country. They had gradually appropriated the patronage of the Crown, and they employed it systematically in maintaining a corrupt majority in Parliament. They kept up the distinction between Whig and Tory as a pretext for excluding from power the great body of the landed interest, and they had reduced the King to a mere puppet in their hands. Dr. Johnson strenuously asserted that government by parliamentary corruption was the master political evil of the time, and that the true remedy was to be found in strengthening the royal power. A prince of ability, he said, steadily and conspicuously pursuing the interests of his people could not fail of parliamentary concurrence. He might and should be the directing soul and spirit of his administration; in short his own minister and not the mere head of a party; and then, and not till then, would the royal dignity be sincerely respected. In our mixed government a certain amount of Crown influence over the Houses of Parliament is not only salutary but necessary.[1]

We have seen the efforts of George III. in the earlier years of his reign to regain the royal authority, and we have seen also how little those efforts tended in the direction of political purity. The election of 1784 was a decisive event in the struggle, but its significance was at first very dubious. Ostensibly the King had completely triumphed, and the most gloomy of prognostications were common in the Whig party. 'The elevation of Mr. Pitt,' wrote one of the ablest of the young writers of that party, 'established a precedent which extirpated

[1] See especially Johnson's conversations collected by Dr. Maxwell.

the last shadow of popular control from the government of England.' Till this event the House of Commons 'had exercised a negative on the choice of the Minister of the Crown.'[1]

But in truth the victory of Pitt was more a victory of the people than of the King; and his character, his talents, and his position all conspired to give him an independent authority. For many years he was the only possible minister, and if the King had desired to overthrow him he could only have done so by falling back upon Fox, whom beyond all other men he detested. Under such circumstances the ministerial power was naturally consolidated. The Minister, and not the King, became the true and habitual centre of authority, and the faction of the 'King's friends' completely disappeared. Jenkinson, who had chiefly led and organised it, took a part in opposition to Pitt on the question of the impeachment of Hastings; but his opposition, which might once have been fatal to a ministry, proved wholly immaterial. Pitt had no fear of him, and he attached him fully to himself. Though he had little debating power, Jenkinson had a remarkable knowledge of commercial questions, and he obtained a high reputation in 1786 by the ability which he displayed in regulating the Newfoundland and Greenland fisheries and in the revisal of the trade and navigation laws. Pitt soon after raised him to the peerage as Lord Hawkesbury, placed him at the head of the reconstituted Board of Trade, made him Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, and ten years later he became Earl of Liverpool, but his influence in the ministry of Pitt was wholly legitimate and was no greater than naturally belonged to a Minister of the Crown.[2]

[1] Mackintosh, *Vindiciæ Gallicæ*, p. 342.

[2] See Wraxall's *Posthumous Memoirs*, ii. 107–109, 146, 147, 164–166, 349.

One serious attempt, however, was made to maintain the old system of an independent influence in the Ministry. Lord Thurlow never acquiesced in the ascendency of a statesman whom he personally disliked, who was much younger than himself and who sat in the other House of Parliament, and he hoped to retain in the ministry of Pitt the position of the King's special and confidential minister which he had previously held. A very mischievous tradition had of late years been forming that the Chancellor, though a member of the Cabinet and entrusted with the Cabinet secrets, had a right to pursue in politics an independent and even a hostile course. Such had been the course of Northington in the first ministry of Rockingham, of Camden in the ministry of Grafton, of Thurlow himself in the second ministry of Rockingham. At first the dislike of Thurlow to Pitt was rarely shown. He opposed a measure for restoring the estates forfeited after the rebellion of 1745, and complained, not unreasonably, that he had not been consulted in its preparation. He made himself the unqualified defender of Warren Hastings, and is said to have proposed to ask the King to raise Hastings to the peerage without consulting Pitt. He opposed a measure supported by Pitt for mitigating the horrors of the slave trade. During the illness of the King he intrigued with the Prince of Wales in order to secure his continuance of office, and although on the recovery of the King he retained the Seals, it was impossible any longer to trust him, and his relation to Pitt was one of sullen neutrality occasionally passing into open hostility. But Pitt met his intrigues and his hostility with firmness and with tact. In 1790 he raised William Grenville, who had been Speaker of the House of Commons, to the Lords and conferred upon him the leadership of the Ministerial party in that House, and in the summer of 1792, when Thurlow had renewed his hostilities by violently attack-

ing Pitt's scheme for the reduction of the debt, Pitt informed the King that either the Chancellor or the Prime Minister must retire from office. To the astonishment and indignation of Thurlow, the King at once consented to his dismissal. He sank speedily into political insignificance, and the ascendency of Pitt was undisputed.

There were, it is true, some later periods in which it was menaced. In 1794, when the great Whig secession had brought a new and powerful element into the Government, veteran politicians believed that the ascendency of Pitt in his Cabinet would wane and that the royal influence was likely to grow. 'The King,' wrote a very experienced official, who had peculiar means of knowing the undercurrents of political life, 'seems to be the greatest gainer from this arrangement. For many years his hands have been completely tied up. He has had no other option than that between Pitt and Fox, who have divided the country and the House of Commons between them. As he was determined not to employ the latter, he, of course, fell under subjection to the former. At present a third party is formed. If he quarrels with Pitt he has Windham to resort to. I really think that till now the King never was his own master, and from my personal knowledge of his Majesty I am satisfied he will be very well inclined to avail himself of the freedom he has thus acquired.'[1] At a much later period the formation of the Ministry of Addington and the defeat of Pitt's policy in favour of the Irish Catholics, showed the power the King could still exercise, but it was Pitt who, more than any previous minister under George III., made the responsible minister the true source of political power, and formed a system and tradition of government which could never be destroyed.

[1] *Bland Burges Papers*, p. 261.

Great avarice of power and extreme self-reliance were marked features of his character, and he showed very little disposition to ally himself with any of those shining talents that might imperil his ascendency. He sought rather to surround himself with men of sound judgment and great business capacity who could never rise into competition with him. With excellent judgment, he selected Eden, at a time when that politician was in opposition, to negotiate the commercial treaty with France, and his warm and close friendship with Dundas and Grenville contributed largely to the success of his ministry. When he gave confidence he gave it without reserve; and in discussing political questions with those whom he trusted, no one was more frank and open, more patient of contradiction, more candid in weighing opposing arguments.[1] Like Walpole, he was fond of framing his measures with one or two colleagues round a dinner-table. His mind was very receptive to the ideas of others, and he was accused of not always acknowledging his obligations.[2] He had a high sense of the duty of a Prime Minister to superintend all the departments of government, and in critical periods of foreign policy he frequently wrote the despatches which the Foreign Minister signed.[3] No minister since Walpole had exercised such unquestioned and absolute authority in the Government.

Another consequence of the ascendency of Pitt was the complete termination of direct parliamentary corruption. The credit of the great and salutary change which had, in this respect, passed almost insensibly over

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[1] See Wilberforce's *Life*, ii. 435.

[2] This was especially true of his sinking fund, the main idea of which was taken without acknowledgment from Dr. Price.

[3] Rose's *Diaries*, i. 108. Political memoranda of the Duke of Leeds (edited by Oscar Browning), v. 164; *Auckland Correspondence*, i. 225; *Bland Burges Papers*, p. 78.

English parliamentary life does not, indeed, rest solely or even mainly with him. The system of corruption appears to have continued with little or no abatement through the Administration of Lord North, but the Rockingham Ministry had almost extinguished it. The exclusion of contractors from Parliament, and especially Burke's great measure of economical reform, which swept away a vast number of superfluous places and strictly limited the pension list and the Secret Service Fund, mark a new epoch in parliamentary history. The long ministry of Pitt, however, confirmed what had been done. He was carried to power at the election of 1784 by a wave of the most genuine popular enthusiasm, and Wraxall was probably correct in his assertion that no House of Commons since the accession of the House of Hanover had been elected with so little corruption.[1] A minister of perfect integrity, who enjoyed great popular support, as well as the confidence of the King, and of an overwhelming majority in the House of Commons, was not tempted to stoop to methods of government which had been habitual in former Parliaments, and during his long ministry the traditions of the old system of corruption were finally cut. The financial reforms which were his special glory, contributed greatly to the purification of political life. Between 1784 and 1799 the numerous sinecure offices in the Custom House were abolished, and it was stated that the expense of collecting a revenue of 22,000,000*l.* in 1799 only exceeded by 3,000*l.* the expense of collecting a revenue of little more than 14,000,000*l.* in 1784.

One of the worst and most wasteful forms of bribery that had grown up during the reign had been the custom of contracting loans and issuing lottery tickets on

[1] *Posthumous Memoirs*, i. 237.

terms which were below the market value, and then distributing shares or tickets among the supporters of the Government. The minister usually settled with a few select friends in the City the terms on which a proposed loan should be made, and gave them lists of the friends who were to be favoured, with the specific sums to be assigned to each. In one instance, towards the end of the Administration of Lord North, the scrip was at a premium of 10*l.* per cent. two days before the names of the subscribers were sent to the Bank from the Treasury. This abuse Pitt finally terminated. When he desired to contract a loan, he gave public notice in the City through the Bank of England that he would receive sealed proposals from all who wished to send them, and in order to guard against all partiality they were opened in the presence of the Governor and Deputy-Governor of the Bank. The lowest tender given by persons of known credit was accepted, and Pitt was able with truth to assure the House of Commons that not a shilling had been reserved for distribution among his friends.[1]

The merit of Pitt in this respect is very great, but there is one serious deduction to be made. No previous minister created peerages so lavishly for the purpose of supporting his political influence, or affected so permanently and so injuriously the character of the House of Lords. At the time of the Revolution the House of Lords consisted of 150 temporal peers and 26 bishops. The simultaneous creation of twelve peers under Anne for the purpose of carrying the peace of Utrecht, and the numerous creations that immediately followed the accession of George I., had given a great shock to public opinion, and formed one of the chief arguments

[1] Rose's *Observations respecting the Public Expenditure*, pp. 26–28. See, too, May's *Const. History*, i. 327.

for Stanhope's Peerage Bill in 1719, which provided that the King should not have the power of adding more than six to the then existing number of 178 peers. The measure was rejected, but from this time till the death of George II. the prerogative of creating peers was exercised with great moderation, and on the accession of George III. there were only 174 British peers, twelve of whom were Roman Catholics, and therefore incapacitated from sitting in Parliament. There had been a Whig majority in the House of Lords ever since the Revolution, but it was one of the fixed objects of George III. to destroy it, and at the same time to make the grant of peerages a means of maintaining his influence in the House of Commons. Forty-two British peers were created or promoted in the first ten years of his reign, and about thirty more during the Administration of Lord North. Even these creations, however, were far surpassed by Pitt. Burke's Economical Reform Bill had swept away most of the sinecure offices by which political services had been hitherto rewarded, and peerages became in consequence much more habitually the prizes of public life. In the first five years of the Administration of Pitt forty-eight peers were created, and when he resigned office in 1801 he had created or promoted upwards of 140.[1] They were nearly all men of strong Tory opinions promoted for political services, the vast majority of them were men of no real distinction, and they at once changed the political tendencies and greatly lowered the intellectual level of the assembly to which they were raised.

A third consequence arising from the ascendency of Pitt relates chiefly to the period when England was at war. It has been constantly, and I believe truly, said

[1] May's *Const. Hist.* i. 232-238.

that Pitt was not successful as a War Minister, that his subsidies were lavishly but often unproductively squandered, that his plans were ill-conceived and ill-executed, and that he had no real eye for military combinations. It must, however, be added that it was a matter of supreme importance to England, when entering on her deadly struggle with the Revolution and with Napoleon, that she should have been directed by a strong and popular ministry even though it may have been in some respects inefficient. A weak minister can never raise the spirit of the people to an heroic height. It is extremely doubtful whether the coalition against Napoleon would have been formed or maintained were it not for the unbounded confidence of foreign potentates in the strength of the English Ministry, in its complete command of the resources of the nation, and in the resolution and stability of its chief.

Passing from this class of services we may next proceed to examine his character as a legislator. His first and probably his greatest title to regard was his financial administration. No characteristic of his intellect appears to have more strongly impressed those who knew him than his extraordinary aptitude for all questions relating to figures, and having taken the office of Chancellor of the Exchequer he gave financial measures the most prominent place in the early years of his ministry. This was in itself a matter of no small importance, for these questions, resolving themselves for the most part into dry and intricate details, make little show in history and rarely excite an enthusiasm or an interest at all commensurate with their importance. Nations seldom realise till too late how prominent a place a sound system of finance holds among the vital elements of national stability and well-being; how few political changes are worth purchasing by its sacrifice; how widely and seriously human happiness is affected by the

downfall or the perturbation of national credit, or by excessive, injudicious, and unjust taxation. The condition of English finances on the accession of Pitt was very serious. The accounts of the war were still to a large degree unsettled. The enormous increase of debt during the war had been accompanied by a great diminution of commerce resulting from the colonial losses of England, while the finances had been allowed to fall into almost inextricable confusion. In the year ending January 1784, the permanent taxes, and the land and malt taxes, which were voted every year, produced together only about twelve and a half millions, which was nearly two millions less than was required for the annual services and for the interest of the funded debt. But in addition to this debt there was a large unfunded debt, the exact amount of which could not yet be ascertained, but which was certainly not less than fourteen millions, and these outstanding bills were circulated at a discount of fifteen or twenty per cent. The deficiency in the year was not less than three millions, and the public credit was so low that the three per cents more than twelve months after the peace were between 56 and 57, scarcely higher than in the most unfavourable period of the war, more than ten per cent. lower than immediately after the signature of the preliminary treaties.[1]

Most of the taxes fell greatly below the estimate, chiefly on account of the recent enormous increase of smuggling. A Committee of the House of Commons estimated the defalcation of the revenue produced by this cause alone at not less than two millions. Whole fleets —including vessels of three hundred tons burden—were

[1] Tomline's *Life of Pitt*, i. 483, 484; Stanhope's *Life of Pitt*, p. 219; Macpherson's *Annals of Commerce*, iv. 52. George Rose states that the floating debt at the end of the war was no less than 27,000,000*l.* exclusive of loyalists' debentures. Rose's *Increase of the Revenue from* 1792 *to* 1799, p. 9.

employed in this trade; 40,000 persons on sea and land are said to have been engaged in it. It was pursued in many districts with scarcely a semblance of concealment, almost the whole population conniving or concurring in it, and there were complaints that agriculture was in some places seriously impeded by the constant employment of farmers' horses in carrying smuggled goods to a distance from the shore. Pitt computed that at least 13,000,000 pounds of tea were annually consumed in the kingdom, but duty was only paid on 5,500,000. Assuming, what was notoriously untrue, that the consumption of foreign wines was only equal to what it had been thirty-six years before, the revenue had in this single article been defrauded of 280,000*l.* a year.[1]

The abuses in the postal revenue were of another kind but equally glaring. In the beginning of the reign every member of both Houses had the right of franking as many letters as he pleased, by writing his name and the word 'free' on the covers, and he had also the right of receiving free, letters addressed to himself. These privileges were soon enormously abused. Covers of letters bearing the signature of members of Parliament were sent by hundreds in boxes over the kingdom, for distribution or for sale; the forgery of franks became the commonest of crimes; one member of Parliament is said to have received no less than 300*l.* a year from a great mercantile house for franking their correspondence, and as letters might be addressed without payment to members in places where they were not residing, numerous other persons were accustomed, by an easily concerted fraud, to receive their letters free under the name of a member. It was computed that the Government loss through the franking of letters was not less than 170,000*l.* a year. An Act had been

[1] Macpherson, iv. 49, 50. Tomline, ii. 170.

passed in 1783 slightly restricting the privilege of franking, obliging the members to write the whole superscription of the letters they franked and making the forgery of franks highly penal, but it proved quite insufficient to suppress the frauds connected with the system.[1]

The reports of a recent commission to inquire into the public accounts had shown that this department was honeycombed with abuses. Treasurers of the Navy had usually large sums in their hands which they were suffered to retain even when out of office, in some cases for no less than forty years. At the end of 1783, more than forty millions of public money which had been issued for the public services were as yet unaccounted for. In 1785 there were four treasurers of the Navy and three paymasters of the Army besides those actually in office, whose accounts were still unsettled. The whole system of auditing accounts was little better than a farce. There were two officers, entitled 'Auditors of Imprest,' who were ostensibly charged with this function, and each had in some years of the war received as much as 16,000*l.*, but their office had become a sinecure; its duties were wholly performed by clerks, who confined themselves to ascertaining that the accounts were rightly added, but without any attempt at a real investigation. Every kind of fraud and collusion could grow up under such a system, and there appears to have been also little or no check upon the fees, perquisites, and gratuities given to persons in official situations.[2]

The extreme multiplicity and complexity of duties opened an endless field of confusion and fraud. Created

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[1] Adolphus, iv. 123, 124; Wraxall, *Posthumous Memoirs*, i. 138–140; Ashton's *Old Times*, p. 122; Macpherson, iii. 400; 4 Geo. III. c. 24.

[2] Tomline, ii. 28–33; *Parl. Hist.* xxv. 298–311.

at different times and without any attempt at unity or consistency, they formed a maze in which only the most experienced officials could move. There were sixty-eight distinct branches of Customs duties. There were articles which were subject to no less than fourteen separate duties. Different sets of duties imposed on the same article had been appropriated by Parliament to payment of the interest on different branches of the National Debt. It was noticed by one of Pitt's best officials that so trifling an article as a pound of nutmegs paid, or ought to have paid, nine different duties.[1] The amazing intricacy of this branch of the revenue made all preceding Chancellors of the Exchequer shrink from any attempt to revise or consolidate it, and it also formed a great field of patronage. When Pitt became Minister there were said to have been no less than 196 absolute sinecures connected with the Customs. They were offices granted by patent and in the gift of the First Lord of the Treasury, and their united income amounted to 42,000*l.*[2]

It is the supreme merit of the early years of the administration of Pitt that he carried order and light into this chaos, and placed the finances of the country once more on a sound basis. It is impossible within the scope of a work like the present to give more than a general sketch of his financial reforms, and such a sketch can only do very partial justice to the industry, knowledge, and skill with which he manipulated a vast multitude of obscure and intricate details. His first objects were to fund the unfunded debt and to put down the smuggling trade. The former object was gradually

[1] Tomline, ii. 235, 236. This statement is given on the authority of George Rose.

[2] Rose's *Observations respecting the Public Expenditure and the Influence of the Crown*, pp. 9, 10.

accomplished in 1784 and 1785. To attain the latter many measures were adopted. Some of them were entirely restrictive. An Act known as the 'Hovering Act' authorised the confiscation of a kind of vessel that was specially built for the smuggling trade, and of all vessels carrying tea, coffee, spirits, and any goods liable to forfeiture on importation, that were found at anchor or 'hovering' within four leagues of the coast, and an immense variety of regulations were made for preventing frauds in the process of distillation and for increasing the difficulties and dangers of the vast smuggling business which was carried on by vessels in the regular trade.[1]

At the same time, in the true spirit of Adam Smith, Pitt clearly recognised the fact that the extraordinary development of smuggling in any article is a proof that the duty on it is excessive, and he adopted on a large scale the policy of reducing and equalising duties, and diffusing the burden over a wide area. It was found by experience that the duty on tea gave rise to the most numerous frauds, and it had hitherto proved impossible to detect them. Pitt, reviving a policy which had been pursued by Pelham,[2] reduced this duty from 119 to 12½ per cent., and provided for the loss which the exchequer might possibly incur by largely increasing the duty on the windows of houses, which it was not possible to evade.[3] The duty on British West India rum, which was another important article of the smuggling trade, was also greatly diminished,[4] while the duties on wine were transferred from the Custom House to the excise, which was found the least expensive and the most effectual method of collecting them.[5] This was the method which Walpole had endeavoured

[1] 24 Geo. III. sess. 2, c. 47. 26 Geo. III. c. 40.

[2] See Dowell's *Hist. of Taxation*, ii. 183.

[3] 24 Geo. III. sess. 2, c. 38.

[4] 26 Geo. III. c. 73.

[5] 26 Geo. III. c. 59.

to introduce in 1733 and which he had been compelled by popular clamour to abandon, but Pitt carried it in 1786 with little difficulty. The abuses in franking letters were remedied by a measure which had been recommended in a report on the Post Office during Shelburne's administration, reducing the privilege to very moderate limits. It was provided that no member of Parliament could frank a letter unless he wrote, together with his name, the post town from which it was to be sent, the day of the month, and the year, and no member could receive freely letters addressed to him except at his actual place of residence.[1]

These measures were carried out with great caution. Though it was probable that the reduction of duties would soon be compensated by increased consumption and more regular payments, Pitt did not trust to this. It was his first principle in finance that a clear and considerable surplus must be created, and he courageously imposed a great mass of additional taxation in the form of duties on different articles. In the budget of 1784 new taxes were imposed which were estimated to produce 930,000*l.* In the budget of 1785 he imposed taxes to the amount of rather more than 400,000*l.*[2] In the first years of his administration he imposed or increased, among other taxes, those on carriages and horses, on sport, plate, bricks, hats, and perfumery; he extended the system of trade licences; he increased the postage of letters and the taxes on newspapers and advertisements, and he introduced the probate and legacy duties. Frauds in the revenue were, at the same time, combated and greatly diminished by a complete reorganisation of the machinery of auditing accounts. One measure 'for better regulating the office

[1] 24 Geo. III. sess. 2, c. 37.
[2] *Parl. Hist.* xxiv. 1030, xxv. 556; Tomline, i. 502, ii. 39.

of the Treasurer of his Majesty's Navy' provided that all sums issued by the exchequer for the service of the navy should be placed in the Bank to be withdrawn only as required, and that the treasurer should close his accounts every year. By another measure the 'Auditors of Imprest' were abolished, and a board of five commissioners was appointed with the largest and most stringent powers of auditing the public accounts of every department. By a third measure a similar body was appointed to inquire into 'the fees, gratuities, perquisites, and emoluments' received in public offices, and into all abuses connected with them.[1]

The importance of these measures in purifying English administration can hardly be exaggerated, and it is a shameful instance of the perverting influence of party spirit that Sheridan, and even Burke, who was himself the author of the first great measure of economical reform, should have ridiculed the minute economies of Pitt, taunting him with 'hunting in holes and corners' for abuses, and describing his measure for inquiring into fees and perquisites as a 'ratcatching bill instituted for the purpose of prying into vermin abuses.' There was a far truer and nobler ring in the language of Pitt, who declared that he could not conceive how any English minister could consider himself justified in omitting 'any exertion that might tend, even in the most minute particular, to promote that economy on which the recovery of the State from its present depressed situation so much depended.'[2]

It was in this class of legislation that the true greatness of Pitt was most clearly shown. In measures of a more splendid and imposing character he was rarely really successful, but no minister displayed more industry and skill in remedying detailed abuses, discovering the

[1] Tomline, ii. 28–33. [2] *Parl. Hist.* xxv. 369–373.

causes that rendered particular branches of the revenue unproductive, introducing order, simplicity and economy into great departments of national finance. The greater part of this kind of work, it is true, is always accomplished by permanent officials, and a very large proportion of the financial measures of Pitt were revivals of measures or projects of Walpole and Pelham, or results of suggestions made by Adam Smith or other political writers.[1] But Pitt had at least the merit of perceiving their value, and it was his eloquence and influence that carried them through Parliament. In this class of questions he displayed a remarkable degree of candour and moderation in accepting criticism and modifying or withdrawing unpopular schemes. Thus in 1784 he withdrew a proposed duty on coal, a proposed licence for hop planting, and a proposed tax on ribbons and gauze, when he found them to be unpopular, and substituted other taxes in their place.[2] In 1785 he abolished the duties on bleached and dyed cotton goods, which had been imposed in the preceding year, on the ground that they had been found by experience to be injurious or unproductive, and at a later period, and on similar grounds, he repealed the taxes he had imposed on shops, on maid-servants, and on foreign gloves.[3]

The essentially business character of his ministry was due to himself, and especially to his habit of seeking advice and support chiefly outside his Cabinet. He was still the only member of the Cabinet in the House of Commons, and the peers who were his colleagues seem to have contributed nothing to his popularity and very

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[1] For an interesting account of the sources from which Pitt derived the idea of many of his measures, see Dowell's *History of Taxation*, vol. ii. Sir Richard Hill drew up in 1784 a long list of suggested taxes. *Parl. Hist.* xxiv. 1233, 1234.

[2] Tomline, i. 506.

[3] 25 Geo. III. c. 24. Adolphus, iv. 176, 177.

little to his strength. Thurlow and the Duke of Richmond were both men of great ability, but the first was usually at least as much an embarrassment as a support, and the latter was extremely unpopular. Camden, who was now the President of the Council, had lost a great deal of his old energy and ambition, and, except on the Regency question, he rarely took a prominent part in debate. Gower, who held the Privy Seal, scarcely opened his mouth in Parliament. Carmarthen appears to have conducted foreign affairs with dignity and knowledge, but neither he nor Sydney, the other Secretary of State, had any unusual talent, or was capable of adding anything to the strength of the Ministry. It was from ministers who were not yet in the Cabinet that Pitt derived most assistance,[1] and above all from Dundas, the treasurer of the navy, with whom from the time of the downfall of the Shelburne Ministry he had been on terms of warm personal friendship and who enjoyed more of his political confidence than any other man. This able Scotch lawyer had nothing of the moral grandeur, the disinterestedness, the consistency or the superb eloquence of Pitt, but he had a far greater experience of business and of men, far more popular and conciliatory manners, and one of the very best political judgments of his time. He was an unpolished but most useful debater, shrewd, practical, ready, and courageous, and he had a specially wide knowledge of all matters relating to trade. The reconstruction of the Board of Trade in 1786 appears to have been fully justified by the prominence which trade questions were assuming in English politics. With Jenkinson, now Lord Hawkesbury, as its president, and William Grenville, afterwards Lord Grenville, as its vice-president, it became one of the most efficient departments of the

[1] See *Bland Burges Papers*, p. 68.

Administration, and the apostasy of Eden in 1786 transferred another man who was eminently distinguished for his knowledge of commercial questions from the Opposition to the Government. Pitt appears to have also had extensive communications with leading authorities on trade outside the sphere of politics, and he gained the full confidence and support of the trading classes, who were every year rising to greater influence. It was believed that he alone of Prime Ministers had thoroughly mastered the commercial system of the country and had made its development the first object of his policy.

His financial statements were masterpieces of comprehensive and luminous exposition;[1] and his great measure in 1787, consolidating the different branches of Customs and Excise, was one of the most important in English commercial history. The intricacy and multiplicity of duties had indeed become intolerable, and the ministry of North had already undertaken to deal with it, and had taken some steps in the direction of consolidation, but it was reserved for Pitt to carry out the work in all its details. He abolished the existing multifarious duties and drawbacks, and substituted for them a single duty on each article, amounting as nearly as possible to the aggregate of the duties it had previously paid; and all duties and other taxes, instead

[1] Mr. Gladstone, in one of his financial speeches, has cited the following description of Pitt's Budget Speech of 1798 from Mallet du Pan: 'From the time that deliberative assemblies have existed, I doubt whether any man ever heard a display of that nature equally astonishing from its extent, its precision, and the talents of its author. It is not a speech spoken by the minister, it is a complete course of public economy; a work, and one of the finest works upon practical and theoretical finance that ever distinguished the pen of a philosopher and statesman. We may add this statement to the learned researches of such men as Adam Smith, Arthur Young, and Stuart, whom the minister honoured with his quotations.'—Gladstone's *Financial Statements*, p. 15.

of being divided as heretofore into a number of distinct funds, were now brought into one general fund, called the Consolidated Fund, out of which all the different classes of public creditors were to be paid. In settling the new duties, fractions were usually changed into the next highest integer, and by this means a gain of about 20,000*l.* a year was attained. Burke and Fox warmly eulogised this measure, which was carried with general assent. Its principle was simple and by no means original, but the magnitude and complexity of the task is sufficiently shown by the fact that nearly 3,000 resolutions were necessary to carry it into effect.[1] Pitt, at the same time, while reorganising and simplifying this vast department, abstained from filling up the numerous sinecures connected with the Custom House when they became vacant, and at last, when fifty of them had in this way fallen in, he abolished them altogether in 1798.[2]

It must be added that Pitt, though not the first, was the second leading minister who had thoroughly mastered and adopted Adam Smith's views about free trade. Shelburne, it is true, in this respect anticipated him, but Pitt had a much greater power and opportunity of embodying his principles in legislation. His two great measures of this kind were the commercial propositions relating to Ireland, which he brought forward in 1785, and the commercial treaty with France, which he carried in 1786. The history of the former will be related at length in the Irish section of this work. It will here be sufficient to say that the original propositions of Pitt, which were accepted by the Irish Parliament, would have established complete free trade, commercial

[1] 27 Geo. III. c. 13; Dowell's *Hist. of Taxation*, ii. 190; Tomline, ii. 233–249.

[2] 38 Geo. III. c. 86; Rose's *Observations respecting the Public Expenditure and the Influence of the Crown*, pp. 9, 10.

equality and reciprocity between England and Ireland; the latter country purchasing the advantage by an annual contribution to the support of the British navy. The scheme was eminently wise and liberal, and if carried into effect it would have probably added greatly to the prosperity of both countries, and would have united them in a bond of the closest intimacy. Unfortunately the jealousy with which English manufacturers had long regarded the progress of Irish industry was by no means extinct; Pitt was compelled by the pressure of the trading interest to modify the original propositions, and among the clauses introduced in the new version was one binding the Irish Parliament on a large class of questions to enact all such laws as might be hereafter enacted in England. Such a proposal might have been wise or the reverse, but it was plainly inconsistent with the complete independence of the Irish Parliament which had been established in 1782, and of which Irish politicians were extremely jealous, and on this ground the amended propositions were rejected in Ireland. It was afterwards one of the most ardent wishes of Grattan and other leading Irish politicians to renew the negotiation and establish a permanent commercial union between England and Ireland on the lines of the original scheme, and without infringing on the constitutional independence of the Irish Parliament. Lord Lansdowne strongly advocated this course,[1] but Pitt, either from the pressure of other cares, from resentment at the rejection of his former schemes, from

[1] In his speech on the commercial treaty with France he said: 'He trusted the old propositions [to Ireland] would be simplified and passed without delay and without being mixed with any point of politics, particularly with that to which the sense of Ireland proved so totally averse, namely, obliging her to adopt implicitly all our further acts of trade.'—*Parl. Hist.* xxvi. 565.

fear of arousing commercial jealousy in England, or perhaps from a desire to keep the question open for the purpose of negotiating a legislative union, declined all overtures, and the commercial relations of the two countries remained, with a few exceptions, as they had been established in 1782.

The treaty with France was more successful, and it seems to me to constitute Pitt's chief title to legislative fame. The policy of commercial treaties was at this time a favourite one. In 1766 such a treaty had been negotiated between England and Russia for twenty years, and it was chiefly English commerce that had raised Archangel from a small fishing village into the great centre of northern trade. Much political alienation, however, had lately grown up between the two countries, and the treaty was suffered to expire, though Russia had in 1785 concluded a commercial treaty with the Emperor, and was in process of negotiating one with France.[1] The project of a commercial treaty between England and France was an idea of Shelburne. As early as 1769 that very able man had protested against the notion that France was the natural and inevitable enemy of England, and he had taken the first steps to negotiate, at the close of the American war, a commercial treaty between the two countries.[2] The French ministers appear to have strongly favoured a policy of free trade,[3] and in one of the articles of the Peace of Versailles it was agreed that commissioners should be appointed to make new commercial arrangements between the two countries on the basis of reciprocity and mutual convenience.[4] The English, how-

[1] See *Annual Register*, 1786, p. 141.

[2] Fitzmaurice's *Life of Shelburne*, iii. 166, 167, 318, 323, 386.

[3] See Macpherson's *Annals of Commerce*, iv. 20.

[4] *Auckland Correspondence*, i. 86, 486, 487.

ever, for some time, showed no desire to carry out the project of the treaty; the French prohibited several English manufactures which had been formerly admitted into France, and a great contraband trade had grown up. Under these circumstances, Pitt revived the idea of a close commercial treaty with France. Eden was selected as the English negotiator in Paris, and the treaty was signed in September 1786.

It was to continue in force for twelve years. It established between the two countries complete liberty of navigation and of commerce in all articles that were not specifically excepted, admitted the wines of France into England at the same duties hitherto paid by those of Portugal, reduced the duties on a long list of the principal articles of both countries, and provided that all goods not specified were to pay only such duties as were paid by the most favoured nation, without prejudice, however, to the 'Family Compact' of 1761 on the one side, or to the Methuen Treaty with Portugal on the other. Privateers belonging to any prince at war with one of the contracting parties might no longer equip themselves or sell their prizes in the ports of the other, and the religious worship, property, and personal freedom of the inhabitants of each country when residing in the other were carefully guaranteed.

This policy required some courage. The memory of the explosion of indignation caused by the commercial clauses of the Treaty of Utrecht had not died away. The popular antipathy to France had naturally acquired a fresh strength during the American war, and it was not forgotten that Pitt's own father had been beyond all things anti-Gallican. In addition to Fox, Burke and Sheridan, the treaty was assailed in the House of Commons with great eloquence by Philip Francis; by Flood, whose speech on this occasion extorted warm eulogies from his opponents; and by

Grey, in a maiden speech which at once convinced the House that a new debater of almost the first rank had appeared among them. Pitt himself made one of his greatest speeches in defence of the measure, and he was somewhat feebly supported in the Commons by Wilberforce, Grenville, and Dundas. In the House of Lords, Lord Lansdowne defended the principle of the treaty with masterly ability, though he criticised in a very hostile spirit some of its details.

The question was argued on several entirely distinct grounds. Looking at it from its purely commercial aspects, it was contended that no treaty could be more advantageous than one with France. It opened to English manufacturers an immediate market of more than 20,000,000 of persons, a market which was close at hand, which must produce expeditious and certain returns, and which would probably eventually spread English goods over the greater part of Europe. What was there to counterbalance this benefit? The English manufactures were well established. With the English superiority in capital and coal they were never likely to be shaken. They were increasing with an extraordinary rapidity, and their great want was a more extended market. This market the treaty would give them, and it would more than compensate them for the loss of the monopoly in America. France, on the other hand, was pre-eminently a country of wines and brandies, of oil and vinegar, articles which England did not produce, and which it was a great object to her to obtain at a cheap rate. The two countries were thus peculiarly fitted to carry on a mutually advantageous trade, for each had its own distinct staple; each produced in great abundance what the other wanted, and the great and leading lines of their respective riches did not clash. It was true that duties on a number of articles of import were to be lowered on an average fifty per cent., but

it was a well-established and often a wise policy to surrender revenue for great commercial purposes. Nor was such a surrender likely to be serious, for increased consumption would rapidly recuperate the Treasury, and the chief loss would certainly fall upon the smuggling trade, which it was a main object of recent commercial legislation to suppress. French cambrics were absolutely prohibited in England except for exportation, but yet they were notoriously in general use. French laces were absolutely prohibited, yet it was said that more than two-thirds of what was called Buckinghamshire lace was made in France.[1] Not more than 600,000 gallons of brandy were legally imported into England, and according to the best estimates between 300,000 and 400,000 more were smuggled.

It was said that the trade with Portugal would be ruined by the French Treaty, but the assertion was at least an exaggeration. We had bound ourselves by the Methuen Treaty to admit Portuguese wines at duties a third below those on French wines, and Pitt was prepared, if the duty on French wines was reduced, to make a corresponding reduction on those of Portugal. If in other respects the trade with Portugal diminished, this was but a slight counterpoise to the great benefit of the opening of the French market. The Portuguese trade was small, distant, and declining, and there had been of late great complaints of the obstacles which the Portuguese Government had thrown in its way.

The political objection was that which was deemed most formidable, and on this point both Pitt and Lord Lansdowne protested in the strongest and most eloquent terms against the popular notion that England and France were natural enemies. 'To suppose that any nation could be unalterably the enemy of another, was

[1] *Parl. Hist.* xxvi. 414, 415.

weak and childish. It had no foundation in the experience of nations nor in the history of man. It was a libel on the constitution of political societies, and supposed the existence of diabolical malice in the original frame of man.' It was not true that all the best English traditions were traditions of hostility to France. Close friendship with that country was the policy of Elizabeth, of Cromwell, and of Walpole. The most deadly blow that had been recently directed against the political system of Europe was the partition of Poland—an act in which France had no part, and which would have been impossible if England and France had been cordially united. It was an act, said Lord Lansdowne, which, 'if kingdoms are to be judged hereafter like men, must one day meet with condign punishment,' and he added, that if he had not ceased to be Secretary of State in 1769, it had been his 'full intention to have proposed to the King of France a confidential as well as an open connection with Great Britain in order to have prevented that reproach to Europe.'

The truth is, as Pitt urged with admirable force, that France and England, instead of being doomed by nature to constant enmity, are from their circumstances peculiarly fitted for friendly connection, and each nation has been sacrificing its most real interests through political jealousy. 'By promoting habits of friendly intercourse and mutual benefit,' the treaty would have at least 'the happy tendency of making the two nations enter into more intimate connection with each other,' and as their tastes, manners, and interests were blended or assimilated, the chances of future war would steadily and certainly diminish. If, however, the old hostility were unhappily renewed, there was nothing in the new arrangement to weaken the military resources of England, for a commerce which made her richer could only make her stronger.

It was idle to argue from the Peace of Utrecht against the present treaty. The commercial treaty under Queen Anne was rejected mainly through party motives, and it was rejected at a time when England possessed very few of the manufactures in which she is now without a rival. That the conduct of France to England during the American war was extremely unfriendly, Pitt fully acknowledged. But the policy of nations should not be determined by mere motives of resentment, and it was a matter of legitimate pride that, after so many efforts to crush England, France now acknowledged herself to have failed, and was looking forward with eagerness to the benefit of an amicable connection.

Such were the chief arguments urged on behalf of the treaty. The arguments on the other side, if less sound, are certainly not less worthy of the attention of historians. The old belief that all wealth consists of money, and that therefore trade can only be beneficial to the country which obtains the largest return in gold, was steadily waning, but it still found one very able advocate in Parliament. The speech of Henry Flood illustrates with singular fidelity the economical ideas of a generation which was now passing speedily away. 'England and France,' he said, 'are naturally and invariably rivals.' 'It was impossible but one must have the advantage of the other in all treaties of this nature;' the nation which is at once the poorest and the most abstemious 'will always drain from the richest in all commercial intercourse,' and for this reason 'France must ultimately diminish our specie and increase her own.' Since Colbert, the French had been steadily advancing in manufactures. 'Had they not a hundred towns now employed in the woollen manufacture? Have they not considerable ironworks? Were they not establishing with all possible expedition and en-

couragement the manufacture of cottons?' France had, in a word, manufactures of the same kind as those of England, amply sufficient to supply her own market, sufficient perhaps to invade the English market, and England will therefore be obliged to pay not in manufactures but in specie for the wines, brandies, and olives which she will receive. Monopoly, according to Flood, is the first condition of profitable commerce. It is the main advantage of colonies that they supply such monopolies, and 'in all commercial treaties with foreign Powers the true policy is to acquire as many of them in your favour as you possibly can, and to diminish if possible those of the nation with which you are in treaty.' But France from her soil and climate already possesses a physical monopoly of the products she would chiefly send to England—and those products were objects not of necessity but of luxury — while England has no monopoly of the manufactured goods she desires to sell.

'The great objects of such a country as this are those countries which are destitute of manufactures, but rich in bullion or in necessary or highly useful commodities. Spain, from defect of industry and from abundance of bullion, is such an object. Holland, from defect of territory and from commercial opulence, is another. The Northern kingdoms are objects from the plenty of commodities of the first and second necessity.' But a trade with a country which will supply us mainly with luxuries, will drain away our specie, and will destroy the monopoly of our own manufactures in the home market, is not a benefit but an evil. It is never wise to risk the certainty of the home market for the chance of any other. 'The market of the world is a great thing in sound; but in reality the home market is in every country greater than that of all the rest of the world.' It is greater in extent. It is invaluable

from its steadiness and its security. 'Foreign consumption is only worth to British industry that sum by which the exports of Great Britain exceed all that she imports for home consumption.'

The commercial ideas expressed in this speech differ, however, widely from those which were advanced by the leaders of the Opposition. Fox expressly disclaimed 'that mode of arguing which deemed exports a gain and imports a loss,' and Burke declared that he felt no jealousy of the manufactures of France, and believed that for a long period our ascendency in this department was overwhelming, though he contended that a close commercial alliance must ultimately 'blend the property of the two kingdoms,' to the great advantage of the poorer one. They argued, however, that even commercially we should lose more through the treaty than we gained. The loss to the revenue from the reduction of duties would be greater; the diminution of smuggling would be smaller than was predicted; and England in gaining the French market would sacrifice others which were more secure if not more lucrative. The Portuguese trade was sure to fall off, the Methuen Treaty would probably not be renewed, and thus England would lose one of her oldest and steadiest commercial connections. Already the Emperor, irritated by the manifest preference of the English Government for France, had retaliated by imposing crushing duties on English goods in Flanders,[1] and it was probable that other foreign Powers would follow his example. France had of late entered most seriously into rivalry with English commerce in the Levant, and one of her great objects was to obtain the carrying trade of the Mediterranean. 'Through her rivers and canals she intended to pour the commodities of England into other countries. She had already by

[1] *Parl. Hist.* xxvi. 413.

her politics contrived to wrest our share of the Levant trade from us, and it was a part of her present design to divert the remainder from its former channel, and, by supplying all the ports in the Mediterranean Sea through the Seine, the Garonne, the Canal of Languedoc, and the Rhone, to engross the carrying trade of the Levant and to ruin our factory at Leghorn and our other establishments in those seas.'[1] It was a matter of great consideration to England that France was now evidently paying a special attention to her navy, and it should not be forgotten that if a near trade brings immediate returns, it is the distant trade of England which chiefly fosters and maintains her naval superiority.

The main arguments, however, of the Opposition were of a political kind, and they show clearly the intense dislike and distrust of France which characterised the Whig party till the French Revolution altered their views. Fox and Burke both complained bitterly of the 'narrow and confined ground' on which Pitt argued a question that in reality affected vitally the whole disposition of power in Europe. 'France,' said Fox, 'is the natural political enemy of Great Britain.' In spite of the apparent levity of her national character, for much more than a century and through all changes of administration and circumstances, she had been governed on a regular and constant idea, 'that of overweening pride and national aggrandisement.' Sometimes by force of arms, sometimes by negotiations, sometimes by small and isolated but well-calculated encroachments on the rights of weaker Powers, sometimes by commercial connections, she had been steadily pursuing her one object, the acquisition of a dominant influence in Europe. England was her hereditary and her most for-

[1] *Parl. Hist.* xxvi. 488.

midable opponent. She had been less consistent than France, and under the Stuarts she had abandoned the task which belonged to her, but since the Revolution her policy had been almost invariable. 'Her true situation was that of a great maritime Power, looked up to by the other Powers of Europe as that to which the distressed should fly for assistance, whenever France unjustly attacked them.' But it was impossible that England could maintain this independent and suspicious attitude, which was so essential to the balance of power, if her material interests were inextricably blended with those of France. The object of France in making this treaty was very manifest. 'She meant to draw this country into her scale of the balance of power, which could not but make it preponderate; to tie our hands and prevent us from engaging in any alliance with other Powers.' The policy of the Government was a direct reversal of the settled English policy since the Revolution, and especially of the policy of Chatham, who had declared in the strongest terms his rooted distrust and jealousy of France. How well founded was his judgment, events had but too clearly shown. No two sovereigns could be more unlike than Lewis XIV. and Lewis XVI., but the traditions of French policy were so persistent that the mild and respectable sovereign who now occupied the French throne had fully rivalled the ambition, while he had attained much more than the success, of his predecessor.

Was it necessary to recall to Englishmen the perfidy with which France had fostered the American revolt while duping England by the most pacific assurances, or the resolution and skill with which, when she had cast aside the mask, she had organised and sustained the coalition which deprived England of the most precious of her colonies? Since that date she had been pursuing the same ends by other means. The fortifica-

tions of Cherbourg were rising with a menacing rapidity. The French navy was eagerly pressed on. In Holland the party opposed to the House of Orange and the English alliance was openly assisted. By extending her commercial connections France was chiefly seeking to prepare for herself new political alliances, to sow dissension among her opponents, to fetter their action by entangling engagements. This was the true meaning of the special commercial privileges which had lately been given to America; of the treaty of alliance and commerce which had in 1785 been concluded with the Netherlands; of the commercial treaty which was being negotiated with Russia; of the eagerness of France to negotiate a treaty with England. In 1761 the father of the present minister had abandoned office because, on receiving secret intelligence of the 'Family Compact' between France and Spain, his colleagues were not prepared at once to resent it by a declaration of war against Spain. By one of the clauses of the commercial treaty, England was asked, for the first time, formally to recognise that Compact. The discouragement thrown by the treaty on Portugal would probably deprive England of her most important ally in the Mediterranean, and would possibly turn that ally into an enemy. Portuguese statesmen would argue that if a close commercial connection between neighbouring nations was so peculiarly valuable, Spain and Portugal were nearer to each other than France and England, and English policy might thus induce Portugal to throw herself into the arms of Spain and to add her weight to the already preponderating power of the House of Bourbon.

In spite of the arguments which were thus powerfully urged, the commercial treaty was carried through all its principal stages by majorities of more than two to one, and it excited no serious panic or opposition among the commercial classes. The favour, or at least

acquiescence, with which they accepted it, contrasts remarkably with their violent opposition to the Irish propositions, and the contrast is the more remarkable as Ireland was certainly far less capable than France of rivalling the manufactures of England. The difference, however, is not inexplicable. English commerce, as we shall see, had already great and special legislative advantages in its dealings with Ireland, and Ireland could offer no market comparable to that which free trade with France would almost certainly open.

The War of the French Revolution, a few years later, tore to shreds the commercial treaty of Pitt, and by a strangely unfortunate fate the minister who had laboured so assiduously to lay the foundations of a lasting friendship between two great nations which had been for centuries divided, was afterwards regarded by France as the most inveterate of her enemies. The merit of the conception of the French Treaty belongs chiefly to Shelburne, but Pitt deserves much credit for the skill and courage with which he carried it into effect. If it did not during the few years of its existence produce all the advantages, it certainly produced little or nothing of the evils that were predicted, and it was an important element in the great increase of national prosperity. One of its most remarkable consequences was an immediate revival of the taste for French wines which had prevailed in England before the wars of the Revolution, and the importation of these wines, which in the year before the treaty was less than 100,000 gallons, rose in six years to 683,000 gallons.[1]

The Commercial Treaty was probably the most valuable result of the legislation of Pitt. That, how-

[1] See an interesting account of the changes in the English taste for wine in Mr. Gladstone's *Financial Statements*, pp. 151–153.

ever, to which his contemporaries appear to have attached the greatest importance was his legislation for the purpose of reducing the National Debt. He found that debt on his accession to office increased to about 250,000,000*l.*, which was two and a half times as large as the amount which Walpole thought it possible for England to support. He clearly saw that its magnitude was the chief permanent element of weakness in the nation, and that if it is pardonable or necessary for a nation in the struggle of a great war to throw a large portion of the cost upon posterity, it is at least unpardonable for a nation in time of peace to bequeath that burden undiminished to its children. In bringing forward a new loan in 1784, for the purpose of funding a great part of the unfunded debt, he said that 'it had always been his idea that a fund at a high rate of interest was better for the country than those at low rates; that a 4 per cent. was preferable to a 3 per cent., and a 5 per cent. better than a 4 per cent.' 'The reason of this,' he continued, 'was that in all operations of finance we should have in our view a plan of redemption. Gradually to redeem and to extinguish our debt ought ever to be the wise pursuit of Government, and every scheme and operation of finance should be directed to that end.'[1] In accordance with these maxims it was one of his first objects, as soon as the finances of the country would allow of it, to provide a new sinking fund for the redemption of the debt.

In 1786 he already found it possible to take considerable steps in this direction. Partly through the new taxation he had imposed, partly through the normal increase of wealth in a period of peace and great manufacturing prosperity, but partly also through the improved management of the revenue, and the

[1] *Parl. Hist.* xxiv. 1022.

great diminution of smuggling resulting from recent legislation, the alarming deficit which had existed two years before was removed, and there was already a surplus of revenue exceeding 900,000*l.* Pitt determined by slight additional taxation to raise the surplus to 1,000,000*l.*, and to apply this sum annually to the redemption of the debt.

The earliest considerable measure for the reduction of the National Debt had been the Sinking Fund, which was first proposed by Lord Stanhope, and was established by Walpole in 1716. Previous to this date a number of particular taxes and duties, limited in their duration, had been charged with the payment of the interest of particular loans; these taxes were then made perpetual and brought into three funds, called the Aggregate, the South Sea, and the General Funds; and as they amounted annually to a larger sum than the annual interest of the debt, it was provided that the surplus should be collected into a fourth fund called the Sinking Fund, and applied inviolably to the payment of the National Debt. This fund was much augmented by the reduction of the interest from five to four per cent. which was effected in 1727, and by a further reduction to three per cent. which was gradually effected by two measures that were carried in 1749 and 1750.

It is now well understood that the maintenance of a special and separate fund for the payment of the National Debt is a mere matter of arrangement or political convenience, and that the capacity of a nation for reducing in any year its national debt depends exclusively on the existence and the amount of surplus revenue over its charges. Every scheme of liquidation must be a delusion if it does not presuppose an annual revenue greater than the annual expenditure. To allot year by year a definite sum to the reduction of the debt is a wise policy as long as that sum consists of surplus revenue, but if

the revenue is below the necessary charges or is only equal to them, it is absolutely senseless. In that case it is necessary to contract a new debt in order to pay off a portion of the old one. If the new debt is raised on the same terms as the old one the country will lose the necessary expenses incurred in launching the new loan, but in other respects the financial situation will remain unchanged. If the country borrows at higher interest than the old debt, it will become to that extent poorer by the transaction. The only circumstance under which it can be advantageous to borrow in order to pay off an old debt, is when it is possible to raise the new loan on better terms than the old one.

These propositions, however, which now appear very elementary, were not recognised in England in the eighteenth century. There was a strange belief, even in the time of Walpole, that by maintaining the Sinking Fund inviolate it would accumulate at compound interest, while the new debts that might be incurred would accumulate only at simple interest, and that it might therefore be a wise policy to borrow even at high interest rather than divert the Sinking Fund from its purpose.[1] How far Walpole himself held these notions is very doubtful. The finances under his management were in a thoroughly healthy condition, and the formation of the Sinking Fund and the exaggerated belief in its efficacy at least strengthened public credit, and enabled him to carry into effect his really valuable measure of reducing the interest on the debt. For some years, however, the policy of applying the surplus resulting from the three funds that have been mentioned,

[1] See especially an *Essay on the Public Debts of the Kingdom*, published anonymously in 1726 and ascribed to Sir Nathaniel Gould, M.P. It has been reprinted in Lord Overstone's *Select Tracts on the National Debt*, and anticipates much of the reasoning of Dr. Price.

after the payment of the interest of the National Debt, to the diminution of its principal, was steadily pursued even in years when the other taxes were not sufficient to cover the expenditure of the country. Between 1716 and 1728, 6,168,732*l.* was actually borrowed, while the sum paid off through the operation of the Sinking Fund was only 6,648,000*l.* As we have seen, however, Walpole soon discarded this useless and cumbrous system. First of all the interest of the new loans was thrown upon the Sinking Fund. In 1733, 500,000*l.* was taken from the Sinking Fund for the supplies of the year. In 1734, 1,200,000*l.* was taken from it. In 1735 it was anticipated and mortgaged.[1]

In 1771 and 1772 Dr. Price, an eminent Nonconformist minister, who during many succeeding years held a prominent place among the political writers of England, published his 'Treatise on Reversionary Annuities' and his more elaborate 'Appeal to the Public on the Subject of the National Debt,' which were destined to exercise a profound and most singular influence on English financial policy. He urged that a certain sum should be annually set aside for the redemption of the National Debt; that it should be employed in purchasing stock in the market at the current prices; that the interest and dividends of the stock so purchased should, in addition to the original annual sum, be invariably applied to the purchase of new stock, and that in this manner a fund should be formed which would increase by compound interest at a continually accelerating speed, and would enable the nation at a very small expense to discharge the whole of its debt.

The essential characteristic, he maintained, of this

[1] Hamilton *On the National Debt*, pp. 93–96. Price *On the National Debt* (Lord Overstone's *Select Tracts on the National Debt*), 329–337.

scheme, was that it should be pursued without interruption, in times of war as well as in times of peace, in times of deficit as well as in times of surplus, and in that case, by the virtues of compound interest, it would produce effects which seemed absolutely magical. 'A State,' he said, 'may without difficulty redeem all its debts by borrowing money for that purpose at an equal or even any higher interest than the debts bear; and without providing any other funds than such small ones as shall from year to year become necessary to pay the interest of the sums borrowed.' 'Let a State be supposed to run in debt two millions annually, for which it pays four per cent. interest; in seventy years a debt of 140 millions would be incurred. But an appropriation of 400,000*l.* per annum, if employed in the manner of the Sinking Fund, would at the end of this term leave the nation beforehand six millions.' 'Let us suppose a nation to be capable of setting apart the annual sum of 200,000*l.* as a fund for keeping the debts it is continually incurring in a course of redemption. . . . A debt of 200,000*l.* discharged the first year will disengage for the public an annuity of 10,000*l.* If this annuity, instead of being spent on current services, is added to the fund, and both employed in paying debts, an annuity of 10,500*l.* will be disengaged the second year, or of 20,500*l.* in both years. And this again added to the fund the third year, will increase it to 220,500*l.* with which an annuity will be then disengaged of 11,025*l.*, and the sum of the discharged annuities will be 31,525*l.*, which added to the fund the fourth year will increase it to 231,525*l.*, and enable it then to disengage an annuity of 11,576*l.* 5*s.* and render the sum of the disengaged annuities in four years 43,101*l.* 5*s.* Let anyone proceed in this way, and he may satisfy himself that the original fund, together with the sum of the annuities disengaged, will increase faster and faster

every year till in eighty-six years the fund becomes 13,283,414*l.* and the sum of the disengaged annuities 13,083,414*l.* The full value, therefore, at five per cent. of an annuity of 13,083,414*l.* will have been paid in eighty-six years, that is, very nearly 262,000,000*l.* of debt. And consequently it appears that, though the State had been all along adding every year to its debts three millions, that is, though in the time supposed it had contracted a debt of 258,000,000*l.*, it would have been more than discharged at no greater expense than an annual saving of 200,000*l.*'[1]

It would lead us too far to enter into an elaborate examination of the now universally acknowledged fallacies that underlie these reasonings. It will be sufficient here to say that the interest of the capitalised stock devoted to the payment of the debt is not a spontaneous product, but is exclusively derived from taxation appropriated to the purpose, and that therefore it is by taxation, and taxation alone, that the debt is paid. The theories of Price, however, though clearly refuted at the time by a few obscure and almost forgotten writers,[2] were widely accepted, and when Pitt resolved upon the reduction of the National Debt he entered into correspondence with Price, received from Price three separate plans for accomplishing his object, and adopted one of them with scarcely any change, though without any public recognition of the true author.[3] His Bill for reducing the debt was introduced in 1786. It appropriated an annual surplus of a million to the purchase of stock. The interest of the stock so pur-

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[1] Price *On the National Debt*; Lord Overstone, *Select Tracts on the National Debt*, pp. 315, 316, 317, 323.

[2] See two of the Tracts reprinted in Lord Overstone's *Tracts on the National Debt.*

[3] See Morgan's *Life of Price*, pp. 45, 120, 125; Hamilton on *The National Debt*, 149–160; Lord Overstone's *Select Tracts*, pp. 389, 400.

chased was to be applied in a similar manner, and to this fund were to be added the taxes appropriated for the payment of annuities as soon as the terms of those annuities had expired. This Sinking Fund was to be vested in six commissioners of high rank, and every legislative precaution was taken to prevent it from being diverted to any other purpose. When the annual income received by the commissioners amounted to four millions, it was no longer to be necessarily applied to the Sinking Fund, but remained at the disposal of Parliament.[1]

The scheme passed with very little criticism. No member of the Opposition appears to have clearly seen the fallacy of its calculations, and public opinion long looked upon the Sinking Fund as the central pillar of English finance. In time of peace, when it was possible to reduce the debt out of a surplus, the financial policy of Pitt seemed very successful, and the process of reduction did undoubtedly proceed with a slightly accelerated rapidity. 7,231,508*l.* of the funded debt had been discharged in the twenty-six years that followed the Peace of Utrecht; 6,013,640*l.* in the eight years from 1748 to 1756, which followed the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle; 10,996,016*l.* in the twelve years that followed the Peace of Paris. In the ten years of peace from 1783 to 1793 which followed the American war the debt was reduced by 10,242,100*l.*[2] In 1792 a new step was taken in the same direction by a measure providing that there should be a sinking fund of 1 per cent. attached to every fresh loan. But soon the great French war began, and it became necessary to borrow largely every year at a time when the funds were greatly depressed, and the credit of the country was strained to the utmost. Yet

[1] 26 Geo. III. c. 31.
[2] Hamilton *On the National Debt*, pp. 23, 24.

still the system of the Sinking Fund was maintained. The nation annually borrowed vast sums at high interest, and applied a part of them to pay off a debt which bore a low interest, and the absolutely useless and unrequited loss resulting from this process in the course of the war can have been little less than 20,000,000*l.*[1]

There is something very singular and very melancholy in this part of the administration of Pitt. By his contemporaries he was generally regarded as the greatest of financial ministers. Godolphin and Walpole had never reached, Peel and Gladstone have certainly not surpassed, the authority and popularity he enjoyed; and the supreme end which he set before himself in his financial policy was the redemption of the National Debt. In the great speech in which he introduced his plan for its reduction, he predicted that the Sinking Fund would so reduce it that the exigencies of war would never again raise it to its former enormous height, and he looked upon this as his chief title to fame. 'This plan,' he said, 'which I have now the honour to bring forward, has long been the wish and hope of all men, and I am proud to flatter myself that my name may be inscribed on that firm column now about to be raised to national faith and national prosperity.'[2] In the same spirit, in his picture at Windsor, he is represented holding in his hand a scroll with the inscription, 'Redemption of the National Debt.'[3] Yet the minister who made these promises is the minister in all English history who has thrown the heaviest burden upon posterity. The National Debt at the end of the American war was about 250,000,000*l.*;

[1] Compare Hamilton *On the National Debt*, pp. 152, 153; M'Culloch *On Taxation*, pp. 458, 459. The work of Dr. Hamilton, which was published in 1813, seems to have chiefly dispelled the illusion about the Sinking Fund.

[2] *Parl. Hist.* xxv. 1310, 1311.

[3] Russell's *Life of Fox*, iii. 54.

at the Peace of Amiens, in 1802, it was 574,000,000*l.*; at the end of the French war of Pitt it considerably exceeded 800,000,000*l.*

An immense proportion of this overwhelming debt was due to financial maladministration. I do not now inquire how far it would have been possible by a different course of policy to have avoided the French war, and thus saved the enormous burden which it entailed. I do not inquire whether the vast subsidies which were so lavishly scattered might not have been more skilfully and at the same time more sparingly bestowed. Putting these questions wholly aside, the case against the financial administration of Pitt is overwhelming. During the first four or five years of the war he committed the fatal blunder of leaving the taxation of the country almost unchanged, and raising almost the whole sum required for the war in the form of loans. In this manner, in the very beginning of the contest, at a time when the resources of the country were still untouched, he hampered the nation with an enormous debt, which made it impossible for it by any efforts to balance its expenditure.[1] On the other hand, in the first six years of the war, he raised by loans no less than 108,500,000*l.* and he raised them on terms so unfavourable that they added nearly 200,000,000*l.* to the capital of the National Debt.[2]

[1] Compare on the taxation in different periods of the war, Hamilton *On the National Debt*, pp. 157, 226; Porter's *Progress of the Nation*, p. 483.

[2] The following passage from one of the speeches of Mr. Gladstone states the case with great clearness and on the best authority: 'Here, Sir, is the War Budget of 1793. What did Mr. Pitt do with regard to the first operations of the war? Mr. Pitt proposed a plan involving an excess of charge over ways and means of 4,500,000*l.* . . . He met this charge not by attempting to fill his exchequer by the proceeds of taxes, but by sending into the City and asking for a loan of 6,000,000*l.* at 75*l.* . . . Mr. Pitt thought he should get that loan at 4 per cent., but he had to pay 4*l.* 3*s.* 4*d.* per cent.

The effect of this policy on the permanent prosperity of the country can hardly be better expressed than in the words of Dr. Hamilton. Writing in 1813, that economist noticed that at that time the amount of taxes was about four times what it had been at the commencement of the war, and he adds: 'The whole amount of taxes upon the average of the last three years, after deductions, is about 65,000,000*l.*—a sum more than sufficient to defray the expense of the war, enormous as it is, but not sufficient to provide at the same time for the interest of the debt formerly contracted. Our present national revenue would, therefore, have been sufficient to support without limitation of time the expense of the present war, on the scale it is conducted, if the taxation during former wars and the early period of the present one had been equal to the expenditure.'[1]

The finance of Pitt has not been without its defenders, but their arguments seem to me to amount to little more than a palliation. Montague and Godolphin had raised the sums which they required on the principle of

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even on the 4,500,000*l.* of the first year. What was the second step? In 1794 Mr. Pitt borrowed 11,000,000*l.*, paying for it not 4*l.* 3*s.* 4*d.*, but 4*l.* 10*s.* 9*d.* per cent. In 1795 he borrowed 18,000,000*l.* at 4*l.* 15*s.* 8*d.* per cent. In 1796 he borrowed 25,000,000*l.*, for which he paid 4*l.* 14*s.* 9*d.* and 4*l.* 12*s.* 2*d.* In 1797 he borrowed 32,500,000*l.* for which he paid 5*l.* 14*s.* 3*d.* and 6*l.* 6*s.* 10*d.* per cent. Again, in 1798 he borrowed 17,000,000*l.* at 6*l.* 4*s.* 9*d.* per cent. Such were the fatal effects of the series of measures upon which he had entered, that in order to obtain those 17,000,000*l.* independently of annuities separately created he added 34,000,000*l.* to the capital of the National Debt. In fact, the financial operations of these six years, unsuccessful and ineffective as they were in respect to the war, gave him a sum of no more than 108,500,000*l.* but they added nearly 200,000,000*l.* to the capital of the National Debt.'—Russell's *Life of Fox*, iii. 55, 56. See, too, the very severe judgment on Pitt's financial policy in Say, *Economie Politique*, 8ième partie, ch. xiv. xvi.

[1] Hamilton, p. 158.

paying a rate of interest for each loan equal to the market value of money at the time. They raised money at par, paying 5, 6, 7, and even 8 per cent., and the result was that in time of peace Walpole and Pelham were able gradually to reduce the interest to 3 per cent., diminishing at each reduction the national burden. Pitt, as we have seen, had once expressed in strong terms his approval of this policy, but his own course was wholly different. He raised his loans mainly in the 3 per cents, obtaining sums which were proportionately below the nominal value, and the result was that with returning peace and rising funds the burden of interest remained unchanged. It has been argued, however, with much knowledge and ability, that the condition of the money market was such that Pitt would have failed in attempting to negotiate such large loans as he desired at a higher nominal rate of interest, or at least that the terms on which he could have done so would have been very burdensome. The fatal error of raising so small a sum by taxation during the first years of the war has been extenuated, on the ground of the unpopularity of the war and the distress occasioned by defective harvests, and by a commercial crisis of unusual severity. But the ablest defender of Pitt has candidly acknowledged that two great miscalculations profoundly influenced his financial policy. One of them was the belief, which he expressed both in public and in private, that the resources of France had been ruined by the first shock of the Revolution, and that the war which had begun was likely to be a very short one. The other was his firm conviction that in the Sinking Fund he had found a rapid and infallible instrument for reducing the National Debt.[1] After a few years, it is true, the

[1] See Mr. William Newmarch's very able pamphlet in defence of Pitt, called *The Loans raised by Mr. Pitt during the first French War* (1855).

magnitude of the problem became evident, and the financial ability of Pitt was displayed in the new taxes he devised. But the error of the early years of the war was not and could not be retrieved, and its consequences are felt to the present hour.

Such, then, appear to me to have been the true outlines of the financial administration of Pitt. He displayed an extraordinary aptitude in mastering and explaining the intricate details of national finance; he adopted and assimilated at a very early date some of the best economical teaching of his time; he rendered great service to the country in simplifying and reforming the tariff, readjusting the whole system of taxation, abolishing much wasteful and corrupt expenditure, and extending commercial liberty. He found the finances of England in a state of the most deplorable and disastrous depression, and in a few years he made them the admiration of the world. But history, which judges statesmen mainly by the broad lines of their policy, and the nett result of their lives, must also pronounce that his financial administration was marked by grave errors, and that those errors, if measured by the magnitude of their consequences, have greatly outweighed its merits.

Passing from this field to a more general review of the policy of Pitt, there are two things with which we shall be especially struck, the singularly wise and enlightened views which he took of the chief home questions of his time, and the extreme paucity of his actual achievements. In 1787, it is true, he joined with North in opposing and rejecting a motion of Beaufoy for repealing the Test and Corporation Acts; but on the questions of parliamentary reform, of slavery, and of Catholic emancipation, his views were of the most liberal type. Yet although he exercised for many years an unrivalled authority in Parliament, and al-

though on these questions he was in substantial agreement with Fox, he did little or nothing, and left the accomplishment of these tasks to his successors. We have already seen how his father had urged that a serious parliamentary reform could not be much longer safely postponed, and had suggested that it should consist of a large addition to the number of county members, and the establishment of triennial parliaments. We have seen, too, that Pitt himself had taken up the question in 1782 under the second Rockingham Ministry, and in 1783 under the Ministry of the Coalition. On the first occasion he contented himself with moving for a committee to inquire into the state of parliamentary representation, but on the second he introduced a definite plan of which the chief features were the disfranchisement of any borough in which the majority of voters were proved to be corrupt, and an addition to the representation of the counties and of the metropolis. The eloquence with which he advocated these measures made a deep impression upon the House and the country, and created strong and general hopes that on his advent to power he would speedily carry them into effect.

Almost the first measure of his administration, however, was very inauspicious. His conduct about the Westminster scrutiny showed that he was capable of employing and even straining against an adversary one of the worst abuses of the existing Constitution, and it is by far the most conspicuous of his very few tactical mistakes.

Amid the general and splendid triumphs of the election of 1784 there had been one partial reverse. The Westminster election excited an interest which attached to no other single contest, for Westminster was regarded as holding among boroughs the same sort of precedence as Yorkshire among counties, and Fox

himself was one of the candidates. All the influence of the Court and of the Government was employed against him, but his supporters were many and very powerful. The Duke of Portland, the nominal head of the Rockingham party, and his brother-in-law, the Duke of Devonshire, occupied great palaces within the borough. Georgiana, the beautiful Duchess of Devonshire, and her sister Viscountess Duncannon, were among the most active and most successful canvassers for the Whigs. The Prince of Wales himself threw his influence without restriction and almost without disguise into the same scale, and Carlton House became one of the chief centres of Fox's friends.

There were three candidates, Lord Hood and Sir Cecil Wray on the side of the Government, and Fox on the side of the Opposition. It soon appeared that Hood, who carried with him the reputation of his great naval services, was the indisputable favourite with the constituency, which had in the last Parliament been represented by Rodney; but the contest between Fox and Wray was obstinate, and for a long time doubtful. The poll was kept open for the full legal period of forty days. At the end of the second day Fox passed Wray by 139 votes, but Wray soon recovered what he had lost, and continued in a majority till the twenty-third day, when he was again passed. On the fortieth day Lord Hood was at the head of the poll, but Fox had defeated Wray by 236 votes.

The triumph was not a very brilliant one, but it was doubly valued on account of the general disaster of the party. There was a great procession to Devonshire House, in which the ostrich feathers of the Prince of Wales were borne before the newly elected member. The streets were illuminated. There were splendid festivals at Carlton House, and the Prince of Wales appeared at a dinner given by Mrs. Crewe, in the buff

and blue uniform of the Whigs, and gave the toast, 'True Blue and Mrs. Crewe.' But in the meantime Fox was not returned, for on the last day of the poll Sir Cecil Wray and thirteen electors presented a paper to the High Bailiff who was the returning officer, complaining of irregularities in the election, and demanding a scrutiny, and the High Bailiff, who was strongly opposed to Fox, consented to grant it.

It is now generally admitted that he was wrong, though it is doubtful whether his conduct was contrary to the strict letter of the law. Scrutinies, indeed, had often been granted by returning officers, but they had been granted before the full legal period of the election had terminated, and they had invariably been closed before the day on which the law made the writ returnable. On that day it surely ought to have been returned, and the jurisdiction of the returning officer should have been at an end. If there was any doubt about the validity of the election, a committee of the House of Commons, constituted under Grenville's Act, and empowered to examine witnesses on oath, was the proper tribunal to try it. Could it be tolerated that a mere returning officer—perhaps, as in the present case, a notorious partisan—who had no power to compel the attendance of witnesses or to examine them upon oath, should take upon himself the functions of a committee of the House of Commons, and by a protracted inquiry deprive elected members of their seats, and constituencies of their representatives, for months or even years after the meeting of Parliament? If the mere suspicion of bad votes was sufficient to justify such a scrutiny, it would be easy to disfranchise for whole sessions all the most populous cities in the kingdom. The conduct of the High Bailiff was contrary to the uniform practice of elections in England. When returning officers granted scrutinies, they had always

made it a condition that they should terminate on the day on which the writs ought to be returned. When scrutinies were demanded which would have extended beyond the specified date they had always been refused, and the House had never censured the refusal. If the law had not in express terms limited the discretion of the returning officers, there could at least be very little dispute about what course precedent and the analogies of the Constitution prescribed.

Fox was not excluded from Parliament, for he was returned for the small Scotch borough of Kirkwall, and he conducted his own case with extraordinary eloquence and with a great superiority of argument, while Pitt, to the astonishment of many of his friends, fully justified the returning officer. A petition demanding an immediate return of the writ was supported by Fox in one of the greatest speeches ever made before Parliament. In the course of his argument he mentioned that, according to the lowest estimate, the scrutiny was likely to cost him 18,000*l*. Pitt answered in a strain of most supercilious and arrogant invective; described his adversary as a 'political apostate,' who, by pretending to be the butt of ministerial persecution, was striving to excite public compassion in order to regain the popularity he had lost, and defeated the motion for taking the petition into consideration by 195 to 117. The High Bailiff was then directed to proceed with the scrutiny 'with all practicable despatch,' but in the beginning of the next session, though eight months had elapsed since the election, the scrutiny was only complete in two out of the seven parishes into which Westminster was divided, and it had scarcely affected the relative positions of the competitors. A motion was then introduced calling upon the High Bailiff to make an immediate return, but Pitt again opposed it and insisted on the continuation of the scrutiny, which

was likely, however it ended, to ruin his opponent. But it soon became evident that on this question he could not command the House. His majority dwindled to 39 ; on the second division it sank to 9, and at last, on March 3, 1785, he was defeated by a majority of 38. An immediate return was ordered. Fox took his seat for Westminster without further molestation, and he afterwards obtained 2,000*l.* damages in an action at law against the High Bailiff. The Government succeeded, indeed, in defeating by a large majority a motion for expunging the proceedings of Parliament in the preceding session on the subject, but on the whole question there could be no doubt that Pitt had suffered a damaging and humiliating defeat.

It left a serious stain upon his character. His conduct and his language appeared to show that he was more capable than might have been expected of acting under the influence of vindictive and ungenerous feelings, though much allowance must be made for the anxiety of a minister to support his subordinate, and for the difficulty of receding from a false path to which, in a period of intense party excitement, he had rashly committed himself. The contest greatly increased the personal animosity which divided the two great rivals, and it shook the confidence of parliamentary reformers in the sincerity of Pitt. It had, however, one valuable constitutional result. Though Pitt maintained to the last that the conduct of the High Bailiff had been perfectly legal, he agreed to introduce an enacting measure preventing such an incident from recurring, and at the same time diminishing the great evil of too protracted elections. By this law the poll was closed at the end of the fifteenth day. If a scrutiny were demanded it might be granted, but all writs must be returned after a general election on or before the day on which they were returnable, after a by-election

within thirty days at furthest after the closing of the poll.[1]

The question of parliamentary representation was raised by Alderman Sawbridge soon after the meeting of the new Parliament in 1784, and Pitt, while asking for a postponement, declared in the strongest terms that his opinions and his intentions were completely unchanged by his accession to office. He reiterated his belief that the faults which had lost America to England were due mainly to the condition of the representative body, which did not reflect the true sentiments of the people, and he promised at a very early date to introduce a Reform Bill. On April 18, 1785, he redeemed his pledge, and at the same time very fully explained his views on the subject. The scheme which he proposed was a very singular one, and it differed in some important respects from any which had hitherto been before the public. It was only to come gradually into operation, and two essential parts of it were that the number of members in the House should be unchanged, and that no constituency should be disfranchised except by its own consent. Pitt proposed that thirty-six decayed boroughs returning seventy-two members should be disfranchised by their own voluntary application, receiving a compensation in money, and that the seventy-two members should be added to the representation of the counties and the metropolis. A sum of a million pounds was to be set apart as a compensation fund; it was to be divided into thirty-six parts, and each borough, on the application of two-thirds of its electors, was to be entitled to one share, which was to be distributed by a special committee of the House of Commons, in due proportion, among the several persons interested in the borough. If the sum

[1] 25 Geo. III. c. 84.

was not at first sufficiently large to induce the decayed boroughs to apply for disfranchisement, it was to be suffered to accumulate till the temptation became irresistible.

When this process had been accomplished and seventy-two seats had been transferred to the county and metropolitan representation, Pitt proposed that a second sum should be set apart which should be devoted to purchasing on similar terms the franchise of any other boroughs which either were or might hereafter be decayed, and that the seats so acquired should be transferred to populous unrepresented towns which petitioned Parliament for representation. This part of the system was intended to be permanent, adapting itself to all future local fluctuations of population, working spontaneously, preventing the possibility of the aggregation of political power in decayed places, and securing a steady but gradual transfer of power to the chief centres of population. In addition to the enlargement of the electoral body which would result from the enfranchisement of the great towns, Pitt proposed an increase of the county constituencies by the enfranchisement of copyholders.

This curious plan appears to have been elaborated in conjunction with the Yorkshire reformers, and it was introduced in a long and brilliant speech. It met, however, with very little favour. The King was strongly opposed to the whole project of parliamentary reform, although he promised Pitt that he would not use his influence against it.[1] The Cabinet was by no means unanimous in its favour, and Pitt did not take the only step that would have given the measure a real chance of success. He introduced it as the head of the ministry, but he never gave the smallest intimation that if

[1] See his letter to Pitt; Stanhope's *Life of Pitt*, vol. i. p. xv.

defeated he would resign his post. The Opposition were exceedingly divided on the subject. North, and probably most of the members of his wing of the Coalition, were opposed to all parliamentary reform, and among the Whigs the same view was adopted by Burke, Portland, and Fitzwilliam. Fox, Sheridan, and most of the Whigs were decided reformers, and they fully approved of the disfranchisement of decayed boroughs and of a large increase of county representation. But although Fox voted for the introduction of the Bill he was implacably hostile to the purchase of borough seats, which was its leading feature. The franchise, he maintained, was not a property but a trust, and he declared that he never would consent to purchase from a majority of the electors what belonged equally to all. The measure was defeated in its very first stage. Leave to introduce it was refused by 248 votes to 174.

The principle of purchasing disfranchisement with money was afterwards applied by Pitt on a large scale when carrying the Irish Union. Pitt acknowledged that it was the 'tender part' of the Bill of 1785, but he pleaded that it was absolutely necessary if any reform was to be carried. It was a notorious fact that the small boroughs were generally and openly treated as saleable property, and, except under the strongest stress of public opinion, a parliament which was full of representatives or owners of boroughs was never likely to consent to their uncompensated extinction. It is certain that no violent public opinion on the subject existed, and that the reform spirit had greatly gone down. Like all nations among whom the political sentiment is highly developed, the English have always cared greatly for practical grievances but very little for theoretical anomalies. During the latter stages of the American war, when an unpopular ministry commanded a great parliamentary majority, and when disaster after

disaster was falling upon the country, the demand for a change in the representative system had grown very formidable. But the election of 1784 had placed in power a statesman who was extremely popular. It had been carried with very little corruption. The country was governed in substantial accordance with its wishes, and it was rapidly regaining its former prosperity. Not more than eight petitions were presented in favour of reform when Pitt moved the introduction of his Bill, and when the measure was defeated there was no serious expression of resentment or regret.

Pitt acted on the question very characteristically. A distinguishing feature of his character was his extreme love of power without any corresponding enthusiasm for particular measures. When it was a question of maintaining his position, no man showed himself more determined and inflexible. When it was a question of carrying out a particular line of policy, no one was more sensitive to opposition and more ready to modify his course. He had made the question of parliamentary reform peculiarly his own. He had described in the strongest and most eloquent terms the dangers arising from the existing defects in the representative system. He had pledged himself as minister to introduce a scheme for reform, and he had now fulfilled his promise. With all the pomp and splendour of his eloquence he proposed a plan which he believed would be final and satisfactory, but it had been defeated in its very first stage. He found that the question was in a high degree difficult and dangerous, and that it was one on which public opinion was very languid, and he at once decided upon his course. From this time he completely cast it aside, and to the day of his death no parliamentary reformer could ever obtain from him the smallest assistance. The great and sudden increase of manufacturing industry, producing new agglomerations of population, rapidly aggravated

the anomalies of the representative system, but for some years neither party in Parliament again stirred the question of reform. At length, in 1790, Henry Flood introduced a plan for increasing the county representation; but Pitt, while declaring that his own sentiments were unchanged, pronounced the time to be inopportune, and moved and carried an adjournment. After the great French war had broken out, the question was taken up by Grey with the support of the small remnant of the Whigs, and was introduced in 1792, 1793, and 1797; but Pitt, now supported by an overwhelming weight of public opinion, opposed all constitutional changes during the war. It was not until forty-six years after the motion of Pitt that parliamentary reform was again introduced by a minister, and when it triumphed in 1832 it was through an explosion of popular feeling which brought the country to the very verge of revolution.

Pitt cannot, I think, under the circumstances, be very seriously blamed for having abandoned the question, though a man of stronger feelings and convictions, exercising for so many years so great an authority over English politics, would have certainly renewed his efforts and have risked something in the cause. Pitt, however, did much more than simply abandon it. Rightly or wrongly, he was so alarmed at the danger of anarchy springing from the French Revolution, that for some years he maintained what was little less than a reign of terror in England directed against all who ventured to advocate any form of democratic reform or to maintain any independent political organisations in the country. And in Ireland his policy was still more questionable. Great as were the abuses of the English parliamentary system they were exceeded by those which existed in Ireland, and in that country the question of parliamentary reform was one of vital and pressing importance. At one moment the idea of supporting a reform

of the Irish Parliament seems to have met with favour in his eyes, but it was speedily abandoned. He made it his object to maintain that body in a condition of complete subordination, and accordingly the Government of this great reformer steadily resisted all attempts at parliamentary reform, and finally destroyed the Irish Parliament by the most lavish corruption in the parliamentary history of the Empire.

His conduct about the slave trade was very similar. The horrors of that trade had at last begun to touch the conscience of the English people, and Pitt vehemently and eloquently urged as a moral duty its abolition. For some years, at least, he was undoubtedly sincere in doing so. Wilberforce was one of his most intimate friends, and it was Pitt who recommended him to undertake the cause of abolition. When Wilberforce was struck down by serious illness in 1788, Pitt promised that if the illness ended fatally he would himself undertake the cause. He supported with all his influence the inquiry into the abuses of the trade and the Act of 1788 for mitigating the hardships of the Middle Passage. He himself introduced a motion for abolition; advocated immediate, as distinguished from gradual, abolition, and spoke repeatedly in a strain of the highest eloquence on the subject. Nothing could be more liberal, more enlightened, more philanthropic, than the sentiments he expressed, and his speech in 1792 was perhaps the greatest he ever delivered. But in his Cabinet Thurlow, Dundas, and Lord Liverpool were advocates of the slave trade, and they were supported by the King. The French Revolution and the insurrection in St. Domingo cooled the public feeling on the subject, and Pitt's zeal manifestly declined. He never, it is true, abandoned the cause; he spoke uniformly and eloquently in its favour, but he never would make it one on which his ministry depended. He suffered Dundas

to take a leading part against the abolition. He suffered the cause to be defeated year after year by men who would have never dared to risk his serious displeasure, and he at the same time exerted all his influence with the abolitionists to induce them to abstain from pressing the question.

This, however, was not all. From the beginning of the war, the complete naval ascendency of England almost annihilated the slave trade to the French and Dutch colonies, and when those colonies passed into the possession of England the momentous question arose whether the trade which had so long been suspended should be suffered to revive. It was in the power of Pitt by an Order of Council to prevent it, but he refused to take this course. It was a political and commercial object to strengthen these new acquisitions, and as they had so long been prevented from supplying themselves with negroes they were ready to take more than usual. The result was that, in consequence of the British conquests and under the shelter of the British flag, the slave trade became more active than ever. Wilberforce declared, in January 1802, that it had been 'carried, especially of late years, to a greater extent than at any former period of our history.' English capital flowed largely into it. It was computed that under the Administration of Pitt the English slave trade more than doubled, and that the number of negroes imported annually in English ships rose from 25,000 to 57,000.[1]

This continued without abatement for about seven years. The cause of abolition had lost much of its popularity, and in 1800, 1801, 1802, and 1803 Wil-

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[1] See on this subject two very striking articles in the *Edinburgh Review*, July 1808, April 1814. The former article was written by Coleridge. See, too, Wilberforce's *Life*, iii. 29.

berforce thought it wise to abstain from bringing it forward in Parliament. In 1804, however, it was determined to renew the struggle, and circumstances had become in some respects more favourable. The Irish members, introduced into Parliament by the Union, were strongly in favour of the suppression of the slave trade, and a few of the West Indian planters, fearing the competition of the newly acquired colonies, began to desire its suspension. In July 1804, Wilberforce, encouraged by some favourable divisions in the House of Commons, desired to bring in a resolution forbidding any further importation of slaves into the conquered colonies, but Pitt prevented him from doing so by engaging to issue a royal proclamation for that purpose. For more than a year, however, and without any real reason being assigned, the fulfilment of this promise was delayed, and during that delay thousands, if not tens of thousands, of negroes were imported. It was not until September 1805 that the promised Order of Council was issued which first seriously checked the trade, by forbidding English ships to bring slaves into the Dutch colonies.[1]

It is but justice to Pitt to remember that the two most illustrious advocates of abolition continued to the last to believe in him. Wilberforce was sometimes dubious and shaken; he confessed that the indifference shown to the cause in the ministerial ranks had 'sickened him of public life and of public men;' he mentions the 'significant winks and shrugs' with which it was intimated to him that he was too easily deceived; but his friendship with Pitt, though it was sometimes clouded, was never destroyed, and after the death of Pitt he expressed in the strongest and most

[1] See the detailed account of these transactions in Wilberforce's *Life*, vol. iii.; also the *Annual Register*, 1806, p. 90.

solemn terms his full belief in his truthfulness and integrity. Clarkson also, while acknowledging that the sincerity of Pitt 'had been generally questioned,' entirely refused to believe that the minister who had been the most powerful and useful supporter of the anti-slavery cause in its earlier stages ever in his heart abandoned it. Clarkson was not, like Wilberforce, an intimate friend of Pitt, but he too had passed under the spell of his personal influence, and he ascribed the failure of the cause during the later days of Pitt solely to the obstacles which the minister had to encounter in his Cabinet, in Parliament, and at Court.[1]

Much weight must be given to these testimonies. It is probable that the real explanation of the conduct of Pitt is to be found in his desire to subordinate the whole question to commercial and military considerations during a dangerous and exhausting war, and also in his uniform and characteristic desire to avoid all questions which might bring him into collision with the King, outrun public opinion, or embarrass or imperil his political position. The fact, however, remains that for seventeen years after the most powerful minister England had ever known had branded the slave trade as immoral and detestable, and had advocated its immediate abolition, it not only continued without restraint, but also enormously developed. There is probably little or no exaggeration in the statement of a most competent authority on the question, who has declared that 'an impartial judgment must now regard the death of Mr. Pitt as the necessary precursor of the liberation of Africa,' and has added that, 'had he perilled his political existence on the issue, no rational man can doubt that an amount of guilt, of misery, of disgrace, and of loss would

[1] Wilberforce's *Life*, vol. iii.; Clarkson's *History of the Abolition of the Slave Trade*, ii. 503-506.

have been spared to England and to the civilised world such as no other man ever had it in his power to arrest.'[1]

At length Pitt died and Fox arrived at power, and he at once made the abolition of the slave trade a main object of his policy. The war was still raging. The King and royal family were still hostile, and, like Pitt, Fox had opponents of abolition in his Cabinet; but, unlike Pitt, he was so earnest in the cause that his followers well knew that he would risk and sacrifice power rather than not carry it. The change produced by this persuasion was immediate. A measure, introduced by the Attorney-General in his official capacity, was speedily carried, forbidding British subjects from taking any part in supplying foreign Powers, whether hostile or neutral, with slaves. The employment of British vessels, seamen, and capital in the foreign slave trade was absolutely prohibited. No foreign slave ship was allowed to be fitted out in British ports, and the Order of Council which had been issued preventing the importation of negroes into the Dutch settlements was ratified and extended. Another Act, designed to prevent any sudden temporary increase of the British slave trade that might arise either from the restriction of the foreign trade or from the prospect of the speedy suppression of the British trade, forbade the employment in the traffic of any British shipping not already engaged in it. A resolution, moved by Fox, was then carried through both Houses, pledging Parliament to proceed with all practicable expedition to the total abolition of the British slave trade, and an address was presented to the King requesting him to negotiate with foreign Powers for the purpose of obtaining the total abolition of the slave trade. Fox died almost immediately after, but Lord Grenville, who succeeded him, lost no time in fulfilling

[1] Stephen's *Essays in Ecclesiastical Biography*, pp. 494, 495.

the pledge, and the measure which Pitt during so many years had refrained from carrying, was carried in 1807, with little or no difficulty, by one of the weakest ministries of the nineteenth century.

The Irish policy of Pitt will be fully examined in another portion of this work, and we shall find, I think, that it exhibits in an aggravated form the worst features of his English policy. It is a history of eminently wise and enlightened ideas abandoned at the first sign of difficulty or unpopularity, deliberately sacrificed whenever they appeared likely to weaken or embarrass the ministry. This was the character of his policy about commercial liberty. This was the character of his policy about Catholic emancipation, which has had consequences of evil that it is scarcely possible to over-estimate. It is not too much to say that the recall of Lord Fitzwilliam at a time when the hopes of the Catholics were raised to the highest point, and when the Irish Parliament was perfectly ready to carry Catholic emancipation, was one of the chief causes of the rebellion of 1798, and that the weakness, if not treachery, with which Pitt, after the Union, abandoned the Catholic cause, created resentments which are felt to the present hour.

In Ireland Pitt had to deal with social and political conditions wholly different from those to which he was accustomed, and he conspicuously failed to master them. In the French Revolution he had to deal with a new and unexampled phenomenon, and it will now be scarcely disputed that he totally misunderstood its character and its importance. In the conduct of the war, the strength of his character and the confidence he inspired proved of great value; but he had nothing of his father's skill, nothing of that intuitive perception of character by which his father brought so many men of daring and ability to the forefront, and until his death English operations on the Continent present few

features except those of extreme costliness and almost uniform failure. Few English campaigns have been more deplorable than those of the Duke of York in 1794 and 1799, and it was not until Pitt was in his grave that the English army recovered its ancient vigour. The navy, it is true, more than sustained its former reputation, but no part of the merit belongs to Pitt. During two most critical years, when the whole safety of the country depended on the navy, he maintained at the head of the Admiralty his perfectly inefficient brother, Lord Chatham; and Lord St. Vincent, who was the one really great naval minister during the war, owed his position not to Pitt, but to Addington.

Pitt was, in truth, beyond all things a parliamentary minister, and in provinces that lay outside the parliamentary arena he showed very little real superiority. The great social problems arising from the sudden development of the factory system, which began in his time, never appear to have for a moment occupied his thoughts. To the terrible and growing evils of the English Poor Law system he was so blind that he urged that parish relief should be given as 'a matter of right or honour,' in proportion to the number of children of the recipient. In this way, he said, a large family will become a blessing and not a curse, and 'a proper line of distinction' will be drawn 'between those who are able to provide for themselves by their labour, and those who, after having enriched their country with a number of children, have a claim upon its assistance for their support.'[1]

In the disposal of his vast and various patronage, no minister showed himself more perfectly and uniformly indifferent to the interests of science and literature.

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[1] *Parl. Hist.* xxxii. 710. See, too, Wade's *Hist. of the Middle and Working Classes*, pp. 90–95.

The touching and discriminating kindness with which Sir Robert Peel so often turned aside in the most anxious moments of his career to smoothe, by judicious patronage, or out of the small funds at his disposal, the path of struggling or neglected genius, was wholly alien to the character of Pitt. In his relations with those with whom he came in immediate contact, he was an amiable and kindly man, but he never showed the slightest wish to recognise any form of struggling talent, or to employ his patronage for any other object than the support of his political interests, or the gratification of his political friends. He had himself some literary tastes, but they appear to have only touched the surface of his nature. No man knew better the art of embellishing a peroration or pointing a repartee with a Latin quotation, and in the parliamentary circles of the eighteenth century this art was prized as the very highest result of education,[1] but he was quite without Fox's power of casting off the ambitions of politics and finding in books a sufficient aliment for his nature. He was a politician and nothing more. Office was to him the all in all of life; not its sordid fruits,

[1] My old friend Mr. William Brooke (late Master of Chancery in Ireland) took down in 1816, from a Mr. Armitage who lived much in London political society in the first years of the century, the following anecdote, which has not, I think, appeared in print. In the debates which followed the Peace of Amiens, the Opposition had taunted Pitt with having failed in the avowed objects of the war—the restoration of the Bourbons and the destruction of the Revolution. Pitt in his reply began to quote the lines of Virgil (*Æn.* iv. 340):

Me si fata meis paterentur ducere vitam
Auspiciis, et sponte meâ componere curas,
Urbem Trojanam primum, dulcesque meorum
Reliquias colerem, Priami tecta alta manerent,
Et recidiva manu posuissem Pergama victis.

In the middle of the quotation, however, his memory failed him. He hesitated and paused, when Fox, bending forward from the Opposition bench, prompted his rival to the end of the passage. The speech and the quotation will be found in *Parl. Hist.* xxxvi. 69.

for to these he was wholly indifferent; not the opportunity which it gives of advocating and advancing great causes, for this he cared much too little; but the excitement and exultation which the possession and skilful exercise of power can give was to him the highest of pleasures. It was, as he truly said, 'the pride of his heart and the pleasure of his life.'

Parliamentary talents under a parliamentary government are often extravagantly overrated, and the type which I have endeavoured to describe, though combining great qualities both of intellect and character, is not, I think, of the very highest order. Under such a government Pitt was indeed pre-eminently formed to be a leader of men, capable alike of directing, controlling and inspiring, of impressing the imagination of nations, of steering the bark of the State in times of great difficulty and danger. He was probably the greatest of English parliamentary leaders; he was one of the greatest of parliamentary debaters; he was a very considerable Finance Minister, and he had a sane, sound judgment of ordinary events. But his eye seemed always fixed on the immediate present or on the near future. His mind, though quick, clear, and strong, was narrow in its range, and neither original nor profound, and though his nature was pure, lofty, and magnanimous, there were moral as well as mental defects in his statesmanship. Of his sincere and single-minded patriotism there can, indeed, I believe, be no doubt. 'For personal purity, disinterestedness, integrity, and love of his country,' wrote Wilberforce, 'I have never known his equal.'[1] He was not a statesman who would ever have raised dangerous questions, or em-

[1] Wilberforce's *Life*, iii. 249, 250. See, too, the touching lines written by George Rose on returning from Pitt's funeral, Rose's *Diaries*, p. 258.

barrassed foreign negotiations, or trammelled his country in times of war, or appealed to subversive passions or class hatreds in order to climb into power, or to win personal or party advantages. But the love of power, which was so dominant a feature in his character, though it never led him to take a course directly injurious to his country, did, I think, undoubtedly more than once lead him to cast aside too lightly great causes which might have benefited her. A certain want of heart, a deficiency of earnestness and self-sacrifice, is very apparent in his career. Perhaps with a warmer nature he would not have so generally preserved that balance of intellect which was pre-eminent among his merits.

His ministry between the defeat of the Coalition and the outbreak of the war of the Revolution may be divided into two parts—that which preceded and that which followed the question of the regency. The first period was by far the more prosperous. It was adorned by the great financial measures I have enumerated and by the commercial treaty with France ; and the nation which imagined itself ruined by the loss of America and by the magnitude of its debt, naturally exaggerated the part which political measures bore in its returning prosperity. With the single exception of the Westminster scrutiny, Pitt's parliamentary management was at this time almost perfect. He was at once firm and conciliatory, and he showed in the highest measure all the gifts of tact, temper, presence of mind, knowledge of the dispositions and feelings of Parliament. In addition to his defeats about the Westminster scrutiny and about the Irish commercial propositions, a proposal of the Duke of Richmond, the Master-General of the Ordnance, to fortify Plymouth and Portsmouth was rejected in the beginning of 1786 by the casting vote of the Speaker. It was a project which was suggested by

the humiliating panic which the French and Spanish fleets had during the last war spread along the coast, but the old English dread of barracks and fortified places was not extinct; the Whig Opposition did not disdain to appeal to it, and the proposed fortifications were absurdly described as dangerous to the liberties of England, strongholds for separating soldiers from their fellow-countrymen, seminaries for Prætorian bands. The defeat does not, however, appear to have at all weakened the ministry, or the advocacy of one unpopular proposal to have diminished the popularity of Pitt. English opinion strongly and warmly supported him, and Scotland, which was advancing steadily and rapidly in prosperity, was gratified by the ascendency of Dundas. A measure proposed by that statesman in 1784 and carried without difficulty, restoring the estates that had been forfeited in the rebellion of 1745, contributed to efface the last lines of division that the disputed succession had left in Scotch life. It was a measure which had previously been contemplated by North, and would probably have been carried into effect by him if his ministry had lasted;[1] but there was a peculiar felicity in its falling to the ministry of Pitt, whose father, by arming the Highlanders and leading them to glory under the British flag, had done so much to dispel their lingering Jacobitism. It was arranged that the heirs to the forfeited estates should compensate the Government for the sums employed by it in improvements and in the liquidation of encumbrances, and the sums derived from this source were to be devoted chiefly to the completion of a work of great national importance—a canal to join the Firth of Forth with the Firth of Clyde.

The question of Indian government, which had been

[1] Adolphus, iv. 137–140.

the ostensible cause of the downfall of the preceding Administration, was settled for the present, by the enactment in a slightly modified form of the Bill which Pitt had unsuccessfully introduced into the last Parliament. It was a measure which differed more in form than in substance from that of Fox, and, while it avoided the mistake of placing Indian patronage avowedly in the hands of the English minister, it in reality gave him perhaps even greater power than the previous Bill. The Company's home government, consisting of the Court of Directors and the Court of Proprietors, remained, but over them was placed a Board of Control appointed by the King, holding office during pleasure, and consisting of one of the Secretaries of State, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and four other members of the Privy Council. This body was unpaid and it had no patronage; but it was empowered to superintend, control, and amend the whole civil and military government of the Company; to examine all accounts, instructions, and despatches, and even in some cases to transmit orders to India without the inspection of the Directors. A Committee of Secrecy, consisting of not more than three members, was to be formed out of the Directors, and when the Board of Control issued orders requiring secrecy, the Committee of Secrecy was to transmit those orders to India without informing the other Directors. The Court of Proprietors at the same time lost its chief governing faculty, for it could no longer annul or modify any proceeding of the Court of Directors which had received the approbation of the Board of Control. A tribunal was established for trying in England abuses that took place in India, and there was an extraordinary provision making it obligatory upon the servants of the Company to declare truly upon oath and under severe penalties the amount of property they had brought from India. The authority

of the Governor-General and Council over the Subordinate Presidencies of Madras and Bombay was greatly enlarged. Numerous internal regulations were made relating to the affairs of India, and several of them were adopted substantially from Fox's Bill, and the measure also contained clauses restricting the patronage of the Directors and making retrenchments in the Company's establishments. The patronage of India was in general left to the Directors, but the Governor-General, the Presidents and Members of all the Councils, were to be chosen subject to the King's approbation, and it was at any time to be in the power of the King to remove them.[1]

The Bill was hotly opposed, chiefly on the two somewhat conflicting grounds of the immense accession of power which the establishment of the Board of Control must give to the Crown, and of the inefficiency of a system which gave the power of direction and command to one body and the nomination of the officials who were entrusted with the task of carrying out those commands to another. Several amendments suggested by the Opposition were accepted by Pitt, and the measure was finally carried by a great majority. In 1786 the section obliging servants of the Company to deliver inventories of their property was repealed; a few new regulations were made in the conduct of trials for offences committed in India,[2] and by later Acts some other slight changes were made; but on the whole the system of double government established by the Act of 1784 continued to direct Indian affairs till the abolition of the Company in 1858. For the next few years discussions relating to India were chiefly of a retrospective character relating to the proceedings of

[1] 24 Geo. III. c. 25; Mill's *Hist. of British India*, book v. ch. ix.
[2] 26 Geo. III. c. 57.

Warren Hastings—a great and intricate question, which only arrived at its final stages after the period I have selected for the termination of this history, and into which it is, therefore, not my intention to enter.

Though the period we are considering, if compared with that which preceded it and with that which immediately followed it, was a period of European calm, there were several questions raised which might easily have produced a general conflagration. The mixed dominion which had so long existed in the Austrian Netherlands had proved a fertile source of confusion and dispute, and in 1781 the Emperor Joseph II., availing himself of the war between England and Holland, had taken the bold step of declaring the Barrier Treaty no longer binding, dismantling several of the barrier fortresses and obliging the Dutch garrisons to withdraw from all of them. Encouraged by his success, the Emperor in 1784 made a new aggression upon Holland by reviving an old imperial claim upon the town of Maestricht and by insisting on the free navigation of the river Scheldt.

The Dutch right of exclusive sovereignty over that river had been acknowledged for nearly 140 years. It was established by the Treaty of Münster, confirmed and guaranteed by the Barrier Treaty of 1715, and by a convention in 1718, and it was believed by Dutch statesmen to be absolutely essential to the security of their country. The Austrians now seized two Dutch forts which commanded the river, and a great Austrian army, accompanied by large trains of artillery, was ordered to march to the Netherlands. On the other hand, the Dutch broke down the dykes round the fort of Lillo, which the Austrians had seized; an imperial vessel in the Scheldt was fired at, and the Dutch strained all their resources to raise a powerful army. A number of minor claims

against Holland were at the same time raised, and the Empress of Russia, who was now in close alliance with Joseph, notified to the States her intention of supporting the Emperor. For a time a European war seemed inevitable, but France warmly supported the Republic, and, her mediation being at last accepted, the dispute was settled by the Treaty of Fontainebleau, which was signed on November 8, 1785. The States acknowledged the Emperor's absolute and independent sovereignty over that portion of the Scheldt which flowed through the Austrian Netherlands from Antwerp to the limits of Saftingen, but on the rest of the river the exclusive sovereignty of the States was fully recognised according to the Treaty of Münster, and the Emperor agreed to abandon all claim to Maestricht and the surrounding country, on receiving an indemnity of ten millions of guilders. A few slight rectifications of territory were at the same time made, a few small fortresses were dismantled, and the contracting parties formally renounced all further pretensions that either might have against the other.[1]

The dismantling of fortresses which took place through the policy of Joseph II. had some years later a considerable effect in rendering the French conquest of the Netherlands rapid and easy. One of the most remarkable parts of the arrangement that was concluded at Fontainebleau was that, as the Dutch positively refused to pay the full sum of ten millions of guilders which was demanded by the Emperor, the French undertook themselves to pay nearly half of it. It is hardly surprising that such a proceeding should have been unpopular in France, and that Parisian opinion should have attributed it to the Queen, who was thus, it

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[1] *Annual Register*, 1784–5, p. 242; De Flassan, *La Diplomatie Française*; Adolphus, iv. 180–185.

was said, without the smallest claim of justice or policy, pouring French gold into the coffers of her brother. The payment, however, perhaps saved France the greater expenditure of another war, and it certainly tended to strengthen that close connection between France and Holland which had been recently established, and which it had become one of the chief ends of French diplomacy to maintain. The Treaty of Fontainebleau was at once followed by a close military and commercial alliance between France and Holland. Each State guaranteed the other the possession of all its territories, and engaged to assist the other when attacked, by specified contingents on land and sea. Each State bound itself to place the subjects of the other on the footing of the most favoured nation, to give the other on all occasions assistance both in counsel and succour, to agree to no treaties or negotiations that could be detrimental to the other, to give notice to the other of any such negotiations as soon as they were proposed.

This treaty of alliance was concluded on November 10, 1785, and ratified on the following Christmas Day. It showed clearly that the star of England had for the present paled, and it was a very serious blow to her influence in Europe. One of her oldest and closest allies, one of the chief maritime Powers of the world, had thus detached herself from the English connection, thrown her influence into the scale of France, and virtually become a party to the Bourbon Family Compact. In the eloquent and ominous words of a contemporary observer: 'All the systems of policy which had been pursued for two centuries by the maritime Powers in the support of a balance of power, all the conventions, treaties, and ties of union between them founded on the seemingly unfailing principles of a common interest, common views, common religion, foreign

danger, and common defence, were now at once done away with and dissolved.'[1]

The Franco-Dutch alliance was one of the results of the enmity which had broken out between England and Holland during the American war, but like that enmity it may be ultimately traced to the rivalry between the two great factions into which Dutch politics were divided. The party attached to the Prince of Orange, the hereditary Stadholder, was steadily friendly to the English alliance, but the more republican, or, as it called itself, 'the patriotic party,' was actively supported by France, and to the growing influence of that party both the war against England and the Treaty of Fontainebleau must be mainly ascribed. The dissension had grown up in the long minority that preceded the accession to power in 1766 of the reigning Stadholder, William V., and it had been much deepened by the feebleness of that Prince. No part, indeed, of the great governing qualities of mind and character which made the elder branch of the House of Orange the most illustrious ruling family of its age, had descended to the younger branch which followed the death of King William III. of England. It is probable that a large portion of the 'patriotic party' would have gladly abolished the hereditary Stadholdership, but the leaders usually professed themselves ready to support the existing constitution, with modifications which would have deprived the Prince of Orange of almost all real weight in the State. They wished him to have no seat in any college of the Republic. They desired to separate his office from that of Captain-General which gave him command of the army, and also to abolish the 'Règlements' which gave him in the three provinces of Utrecht, Overyssel, and Guelderland, the direct appointment of the magistrates of

[1] *Annual Register*, 1784–5, pp. 137–139.

towns. The two parties were nearly balanced. In the summer and autumn of 1785 numerous 'free companies' supporting the 'patriotic' party appeared in arms, and in several of the chief towns there were disturbances almost amounting to revolution. In the September of this year the Stadholder was obliged to abandon the Hague, but Guelderland and some other portions of the Netherlands still warmly supported him. A year later the Stadholder, with the full assent of the States of Guelderland, subdued the towns of Elburg and Hattem, in that province, which had revolted against them; and the States of Holland, with only two dissentient voices, assuming a right which they did not possess over a neighbouring province, suspended the Stadholder from the office of Captain-General.

These events produced an extreme and general agitation. Sir James Harris, the English minister, was indefatigable in supporting by his counsel and influence the party of the Stadholder, and he organised the resistance to the French party with great skill and success. In September 1786, however, when the States of Holland deprived the Prince of Orange of his military authority, the prospect seemed extremely dark. Groningen and Overyssel, Harris wrote, were irreconcilably lost to the House of Orange. Utrecht might at any moment abandon her allegiance. In Friesland the contest ran very high, but the majority in the States seemed unfavourably disposed. Even Zealand, which had been warmly attached to the Stadholder, seemed swerving from the cause. French money was abundantly distributed; the leaders of the 'patriotic' faction held meetings at the house of the French ambassador, and it was generally believed that they intended, by the advice and with the support of France, to deprive the Stadholder of his office and to declare that it should no longer be hereditary in the House of Orange. French

diplomatists openly said that an hereditary Stadholder was of too new a creation to have acquired a constitutional sanction; that it never had the approbation of the whole Republic, and that, as it was brought about by a revolution, it might be destroyed in the same manner.

The Prince of Orange had already appealed for help to Frederick the Great of Prussia, but the old sovereign showed little or no disposition to take any serious part in the dispute. He died, however, on August 17, 1786, and the accession to the throne of his nephew Frederick William II., who was brother of the Princess of Orange, greatly changed the situation. Immediately after the events in Guelderland, Goertz was sent from Prussia and Rayneval from France in hopes of composing or influencing affairs in the Netherlands, but they met with no success, and in January 1787 they were both recalled. In February, Vergennes, who had long been a leading influence in French politics, died. For a few months the dissensions in the Netherlands seemed to smoulder, but towards the end of June the Princess of Orange, having determined to visit the Hague, from which her husband was excluded, was arrested on her way, turned back and treated like a prisoner. She at once appealed to her brother, but the States-General, relying on French support, refused to give any satisfaction. In September a Prussian army of more than 20,000 men, under the Duke of Brunswick, invaded Holland.

The Prussian intervention was largely due to English influence, and it was rendered possible by a secret convention which was signed between the two countries. The chief measures necessary for the restoration of the Stadholder to his full powers were agreed upon, and England bound herself to prepare forty ships of the line to support Prussia, and to declare war against any Power which attempted to interfere with her enterprise. In Holland, Sir James Harris took an extremely active

part, and large sums of English money were expended in arming the supporters of the Stadholder.[1] It soon appeared that the attitude of Prussia had a decisive effect, and that a great proportion of the people were on the side of the House of Orange and rather favoured than resented the invasion. Utrecht, which had been prominent in its resistance to the Prince, surrendered without a blow. The Stadholder, after an absence of two years, returned to the Hague. The horses were taken from his carriage when he was still a mile from the town, and he was drawn in by the corps of Orange burghers amid demonstrations of the most enthusiastic welcome. Great crowds wearing orange flowers and ribbons thronged the streets, and the colour which had long been proscribed streamed from every window. On October 10 the work was completed by the surrender of Amsterdam. England now declared that she would defend the Stadholder if he were attacked, and her fleets were at once prepared for action, while France, which was rapidly approaching her Revolution, shrank from open intervention. The victory was used with much moderation. A few magistrates were deposed; a few officers were cashiered; a few conspicuous members of the 'patriotic' party were exiled, but a general amnesty calmed the minds of men, and an 'Act of Mutual Guarantee of the Seven United Provinces,' signed by the various States, declared it to be an essential part of the Dutch Constitution that the hereditary dignities of Stadholder, Captain-General, and Admiral-General should be vested in the House of Orange.

Changes in constitutions effected by foreign intervention are rarely lasting, for they commonly turn the

[1] *Malmesbury Diaries*, ii. 355, 367, 372. On the determination of Pitt to declare war against France if that Power opposed the restoration of the power of the Stadholder, see the *Auckland Correspondence*, i. 195, 204.

national feeling against the ascendant party. In a few years, however, the storm of the French Revolution swept over the Dutch Republic, and it not only effaced the old lines of party division, but also almost destroyed the animosities and passions of former conflicts. Sir James Harris was created Lord Malmesbury as a reward for his services during the events that have been described, and English statesmen had every reason to congratulate themselves on the issue of the conflict. The menacing alliance between France and Holland was dissolved. The party which most valued the English connection regained its ascendency. By a treaty of mutual defence between Great Britain and the States-General, which was signed in April 1788, England guaranteed the hereditary Stadholdership to the House of Orange, and in the same year the triple alliance of Great Britain, the Netherlands, and Prussia was signed, which during the following years exercised a great influence on European affairs. The policy of France was for the present completely defeated, and in Holland as well as in America her efforts to stimulate democratic revolution reacted powerfully and fatally upon herself.[1]

The position of the Austrian Netherlands continued, however, to be a matter of much disquietude to the small number of English statesmen who watched with real care and knowledge the affairs of the Continent.[2]

[1] The fullest accounts of these events (written from the two opposite sides) will be found in an anonymous sketch of *The History of the Dutch Republic for the last ten years reckoning from the year* 1777 (London, 1788), written by George Ellis, Secretary to the English Embassy at the Hague, and in a memoir by Caillard, French Chargé d'Affaires at the Hague, which is published in the third volume of Ségur's *Tableau Historique*. See, too, the *Malmesbury Diaries*, the *Annual Register*, and Adolphus.

[2] Sir James Harris, writing to Mr. Ewart, English Secretary at Berlin (*Malmesbury Diaries*, ii. 112), says: 'Our principals at home are too much occupied with the House of Commons to attend to what passes on the Continent; and if any good is

The arrangement of the Peace of Utrecht, by which that country was placed under the dominion of the House of Austria on the condition that a long line of its most powerful fortresses should be jointly garrisoned by Imperial and Dutch troops, appeared to the statesmen of that day eminently fitted to guard against French aggression in a quarter where it was peculiarly dangerous and would otherwise have been peculiarly easy. It was intended to secure the concurrence of the two Powers in resisting any French encroachments ; to make it impossible, or at least very unlikely, that a country of extreme strategical importance should be governed by a sovereign devoted to French interests, and at the same time to bring the Emperor, whose chief dominions lay in a distant part of the Continent, into close union and connection with the maritime Powers. As might, however, have been expected, Austria, finding herself the stronger Power in a divided and restricted dominion, soon made it her main object to emancipate herself from her restraints, and the repudiation of the Barrier Treaty by Joseph II. completely destroyed this part of the system established by the Peace of Utrecht. The Emperor now treated the Austrian Netherlands as if they were in exactly the same relation to him as his hereditary states, and he entered into a course of hostilities with the very Power which the Austrian dominion in Flanders was intended chiefly to protect.

ever done there, it must be effected through the King's ministers abroad and not by those about his person. Long experience has taught me this, and I never yet received an instruction that was worth reading.' It is curious to compare this with the judgment of Burke. Writing in 1791 he said: 'I have long been persuaded that those in power here, instead of governing their ministers at foreign courts, are entirely swayed by them. That corps has no one point of manly policy in their whole system; they are a corps of intriguers, who sooner or later will turn our offices into an academy of cabal and confusion.'—Burke's *Correspondence*, iii. 268, 269.

Another project speedily followed. Joseph endeavoured to obtain by negotiation the object at which his mother had long aimed by war, the annexation of Bavaria to his dominions. In 1785 he entered into negotiations with the Elector Palatine for an exchange of territory of the most extensive kind. The Elector was to cede to Austria, Bavaria and the Upper Palatinate with the Principalities of Neuburg, Sulzbach, and the Landgravate of Leuchtenberg, receiving in return the Austrian Netherlands with the title of King. The Empress of Russia favoured the exchange, and France was to be pacified by the cession of Namur and of Luxemburg. But Frederick the Great, who saw clearly that the acquisition of Bavaria and the Palatinate would give Austria an overwhelming preponderance in Germany, and that the acquisition of Luxemburg by the French might greatly imperil his own dominions, succeeded in defeating the project, and under his influence the German Confederation for the common defence of the German Constitution was formed in 1785. This was the last and by no means the least considerable of his many triumphs.[1]

All these things had naturally unsettled and alienated the Flemish subjects of Joseph. They had caught no small measure of the democratic and unquiet spirit which was spreading rapidly through Europe, and the suppression of some convents and ecclesiastical schools, the removal of a university from Louvain to Brussels, an edict of toleration which offended the ecclesiastical powers, and a number of hasty and ill-considered innovations which trenched upon or annulled some of the ancient privileges of the Netherlands, increased the dis-

[1] See De Flassan, *Diplomatie Française*, vi. 376–378; Heeren's *Political System of Europe*, ii. 59-61; *Malmesbury Diaries*, ii. 102-106.

content. In 1786 and 1787 there were serious tumults at Louvain and Brussels, and secret societies began to ramify through the provinces. The actual outbreak did not take place till about two years later, but there were already abundant signs of danger in the country which had so often proved the centre and the source of great European conflagrations.

As yet, however, these things scarcely disturbed the calm sea of English politics. Nor was English opinion at first at all moved by the revival of the Eastern question and the declaration of war by Turkey against Russia in August 1787. Foreign politics, which a few years later became so prominent, were now scarcely mentioned in Parliament, and the ascendency of Pitt was entirely unshaken, till the illness of the King raised the great and difficult question of the regency.

This question, which for a time threatened to produce a complete change in the Government, owed its importance almost exclusively to its relation to party politics, and, in order to understand it, it will be necessary to review from a somewhat earlier period the connection between the Whig leaders and the heir to the crown. That connection had already existed for several years. When little more than a boy, the Prince of Wales had plunged into a career of extravagance and vice, and he found in Charles Fox one of the most seductive and most dangerous of friends. He was so intimate with him that he habitually called him by his Christian name, and a close political as well as social intercourse subsisted between them. At eighteen the Prince was already the accepted lover of Mrs. Robinson, the well-known Perdita. Before he was twenty his influence was employed at a Windsor election in opposition to the Court. As we have already seen, when the Coalition Ministry rose to power one of the first questions on which it came into collision with the King was

the allowance to the Prince of Wales on the attainment of his majority, and Fox desired to make that allowance much larger and more independent than the King would allow. The political sympathies of the Prince were shown without the smallest disguise. He was a member of Brooks's Club. He lived habitually in a circle of young and dissipated Whigs, among whom, as was well known, the King and Court were continually spoken of with the greatest disrespect. He voted for Fox's India Bill, though he abstained, in deference to the King's express wish, from the final division. In the election of 1784 he ostentatiously espoused the cause of Fox, and Lord Cornwallis mentions that the friends of the ministry rarely saw him, as 'there was not a more violent Foxite in the kingdom.'[1]

He was now completely alienated from his father, who appears to have regarded him with absolute hatred, and he was overwhelmed with debt. Of the 60,000*l.* which Parliament had voted to him in 1783, half was intended to pay the debts which he had incurred, but in 1785 he admitted to Sir James Harris that his debts then amounted to no less than 160,000*l.*[2] In the autumn of the preceding year he had written to the King stating his embarrassments and expressing his desire to travel and to economise, but the King received his overture with great coldness, refused to give him permission to leave England, and gave little or no hope that the ministers would be authorised to apply to Parliament for his relief. He insisted on an exact account of the debts of his son, but there was one debt of 25,000*l.* which the Prince said he was bound in honour not to explain.

In the spring of 1785 Sir James Harris had two

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[1] Cornwallis's *Correspondence*, i. 160, 161.
[2] *Malmesbury Diaries*, ii. 122.

long conferences with the Prince on the state of his affairs. He was peculiarly fitted for the task; for, while he was one of the ablest and most discreet diplomatists in the service of the Government, he was at the same time a warm personal friend of the leaders of the Opposition. He was able to give the Prince, not indeed a positive assurance, but at least some hope that the ministry would move an increase of his income provided he would appropriate a fixed portion to the payment of his debts, renounce his intention of leaving England, reconcile himself with the King, and abstain from mixing in party politics. 'A Prince of Wales,' Harris truly said, 'ought to be of no party,' and he was enabled to assure the Prince that both Fox and the Duke of Portland fully acquiesced in this opinion, and had no wish to see him a Whig partisan. He at the same time strenuously recommended a speedy marriage as a duty to the nation and as the simplest and most natural way of rectifying his position. The Prince vehemently declared that he would never marry; he repeated again and again that the King hated him, and would never consent to any proposal in his favour. He still spoke of his intention of leaving England, and he produced a number of letters from the King which appeared to Harris 'so harsh and severe,' so 'void of every expression of parental kindness or affection,' that they fully justified the Prince's judgment of the sentiments of his father.[1]

Nothing resulted from these interviews. The Prince was now completely under the influence of an ungovernable passion for Mrs. Fitzherbert, a young and beautiful Catholic lady of good family and reputation, who at the early age of twenty-five had been left for the second time a widow. The acquaintance began at

[1] *Malmesbury Diaries*, ii. 121-130.

Richmond in the summer of 1784, when the Prince was twenty-three and Mrs. Fitzherbert twenty-eight. She appears to have been much alarmed at his advances and to have strongly discouraged them, and their intercourse is said for a time to have ended with a very strange scene, which is thus related, on the authority of Mrs. Fitzherbert, by her relative and intimate friend Lord Stourton: 'Keith the surgeon, Lord Onslow, Lord Southampton, and Mr. Edward Bouverie, arrived at Mrs. Fitzherbert's house in the utmost consternation, informing her that the life of the Prince was in imminent danger—that he had stabbed himself—and that only *her* immediate presence could save him. She resisted in the most peremptory manner all their importunities, saying that nothing should induce her to enter Carlton House. She was afterwards brought to share in the alarm, but, still fearful of some stratagem derogatory to her reputation, insisted on some lady of high character accompanying her, as an indispensable condition. The Duchess of Devonshire was selected. They four drove from Park Street to Devonshire House and took her along with them. She found the Prince pale and covered with blood. The sight so overpowered her faculties that she was deprived almost of all consciousness. The Prince told her that nothing would induce him to live unless she promised to become his wife and permitted him to put a ring round her finger—I believe a ring from the hand of the Duchess of Devonshire was used upon the occasion and not one of his own. . . . They returned to Devonshire House. A deposition was drawn up of what had occurred, and signed and sealed by each one of the party, and for all she knew to the contrary might still be there. On the next day she left the country, sending a letter to Lord Southampton protesting against what had taken place as not being then a free agent. She retired to Aix-la-Chapelle and

afterwards to Holland. The Prince went down into the country to Lord Southampton's for change of air.' [1]

Mrs. Fitzherbert remained on the Continent for more than a year, but the passion of the Prince was unabated. Mrs. Armitstead, the mistress, and afterwards wife, of Fox, assured Lord Holland that the Prince frequently spoke to herself and Fox upon the subject with paroxysms of despair, 'that he cried by the hour, that he testified the sincerity and violence of his passion and his despair by the most extravagant expressions and actions, rolling on the floor, striking his forehead, tearing his hair, falling into hysterics, and swearing that he would abandon the country, forego the crown, sell his jewels and plate, and scrape together a competence to fly with the object of his affections to America.' He constantly corresponded with Mrs. Fitzherbert, and one of his letters entreating her to marry him is said to have extended to no less than thirty-seven pages.[2] At last Mrs. Fitzherbert consented, and in December 1785 she returned to England for the purpose of marrying the Prince.

The resolution was a serious one. In the first place, as the Prince of Wales was still under twenty-five, the marriage, according to the Royal Marriage Act, could have no legal validity without the consent of the King, which would most certainly not be given. In the next place, by the Act of Settlement, marriage with a Roman Catholic throws the Prince contracting it out of the succession to the throne, and makes the other parties concerned in it liable to the penalties of *præmunire*, and it was very doubtful whether the invalidity of the ceremony would save the Prince from the legal penalty. The second marriage of a bigamist is worth-

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[1] Langdale's *Memoirs of Mrs. Fitzherbert*, pp. 118, 119.

[2] Lord Stourton says he saw this letter. Ibid. p. 121.

less in the eyes of the law, but this does not exempt him from the penal consequences of his act, and it was at least a question whether on the same principle even an invalid marriage of the Prince of Wales with a Roman Catholic would not be sufficient to deprive him of his right to the succession to the crown. Rumours of the intended marriage got abroad, and Fox, in a long, able, and very respectful letter, urged in the strongest terms its extreme danger. It would be dangerous, he said, to the Prince, dangerous to Mrs. Fitzherbert, dangerous to the nation itself, which might very possibly be cursed with a new disputed succession. 'Such a marriage,' in fact, 'would be the most desperate measure for all parties concerned that their worst enemies could have suggested.' The Prince answered in a few lines, expressing his gratitude for the friendship of Fox. 'Make yourself easy, my dear friend,' he continued. 'Believe me, the world will now soon be convinced that there not only is, but never was any grounds for these reports which of late have been so malevolently circulated.' He then turned abruptly from the subject. 'I have not seen you since the apostasy of Eden. I think it ought to have the same effect upon all our friends that it has upon me, I mean the linking us closer to each other.'[1]

This letter was written on December 11, 1785. Just ten days later, without the knowledge of Fox, the Prince was married to Mrs. Fitzherbert by a Protestant clergyman. Her uncle and brother were the witnesses, and Lord Onslow, Lord Southampton, Mr. Edward Bouverie, and Mr. Keith were also present. Although there was no Roman Catholic priest, the religious ceremony, from a Catholic as well as from an Anglican point of view, was perfectly valid. The sacrament of

[1] Holland's *Memoirs of the Whig Party*, ii. 127–137.

marriage, according to the Roman Catholic theory, depends merely on the expressed consent of the two contracting persons to take each other as husband and wife, and before the Council of Trent a purely civil marriage effected by mere consent without the intervention of any priest, though it would have been irregular, would have been fully valid, and have had all the character of a sacrament. The Council of Trent for the first time, and in order to prevent the abuses which arose from clandestine marriages, made the presence of a priest indispensable, but the discipline of the Council had not yet been promulgated in England, and was therefore not binding on English Catholics.[1]

The secret of the marriage was not perfectly kept. In society Mrs. Fitzherbert seems to have been received as the wife of the Prince, and a pamphlet appeared, written by Horne Tooke, in which she was denominated the Princess of Wales. In the meantime the embarrassments of the Prince increased. In 1786 there was an execution for 600*l.* at Carlton House, and the Sheriff's officers remained in possession for two days before a responsible surety for this small sum could be found. The Prince now formally applied to the King for assistance, and was formally and harshly refused.[2] In the spring of this year the King himself came to Parliament for the payment of a new debt of 30,000*l.* which had been incurred contrary to the express promise made in the royal speech as late as 1782, and in the course of the debate both Sheridan and Fox complained of the inadequacy of the allowance of the Prince of Wales, and expressed their hope that the minister would bring in some proposition to extricate him from his difficulties. If the

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[1] See a discussion on this point in Langdale's *Life of Mrs. Fitzherbert*, pp. 31–36, and Migne's *Encyclopédie Théologique*, art. 'Mariage.'

[2] Adolphus, iv. 216.

minister did not do this, Fox intimated that he would himself bring the subject before Parliament. The Prince appears to have had in this respect some real ground for complaint, but Pitt shortly answered that he had no instructions on the subject.[1] Despairing of assistance, the Prince then stopped all the works at Carlton House, closed the greater part of the palace, dismissed his court officers, sold all his horses, and announced his intention of assigning 40,000*l.* a year of his income to the payment of his debts. The extreme animosity with which he was regarded at Court was conspicuously evinced in the August of this year, when Margaret Nicholson attempted to stab the King. No tidings of the attempt were sent to the Prince of Wales, and when, on hearing of it, he hastened to the palace to congratulate his father on the escape, his father refused to see him.

As the ministers declined to come to the assistance of the Prince, it was at last determined to introduce the question without their countenance. There was, however, great division and hesitation on the subject among the Opposition. The Duke of Portland was totally opposed to an application to Parliament. Burke stated that, as he had formerly taken a leading part in opposing the payment of the King's debts, and as he was the author of the Establishment Bill for restricting the King's expenditure, it was impossible for him to advocate the payment of the Prince of Wales's debts by Parliament, and he therefore resolved to go into the country during the discussion, and informed the Prince of Wales of his intention. Many other leading men of the party, and especially the country gentlemen connected with it, took a similar view. Fox appears at first to have agreed with them, but he determined to

[1] *Parl. Hist.* xxv. 1354-1356.

support the application when it became evident that the Prince was determined that it should be made. It was foreseen clearly that the difficult and delicate question of the marriage of Mrs. Fitzherbert would inevitably come into discussion if the demand were pressed, and the event showed that the prediction was correct.[1]

On April 20, 1787, Alderman Newnham rose and asked Pitt whether the Government intended to bring forward any proposition for the payment of the Prince's debts. Pitt answered that it was not his duty to do so except by the command of the King, and that he had received no such command. Newnham then gave notice that he would himself introduce a motion. Several short conversations subsequently took place, and in the course of one of them Mr. Rolle—a county member who is now chiefly remembered as the hero of the 'Rolliad'—made a short speech in which he warned the Opposition that an inquiry into the affairs of the Prince of Wales might involve matters by which 'the constitution both in Church and State might be essentially affected.'

The words flew swiftly to their mark. It was at once understood that they referred to the alleged marriage of the Prince of Wales, and three days later, when there had been ample time to communicate with the Prince, Fox made a remarkable statement on the subject. Speaking, as he said, with the 'immediate authority' of the Prince of Wales, he declared the perfect willingness of the Prince to submit his pecuniary affairs and his correspondence with the King to the fullest investigation, and he then proceeded to refer to the observations of Rolle. The allusion to something

[1] See some very interesting letters of Sir G. Elliot on the subject.—*Life of Sir G. Elliot* i. 155–164.

full of danger to Church and State, referred, he supposed, to 'that miserable calumny, that low malicious falsehood which had been propagated without doors . . . an invention so monstrous, a report of a fact which had not the smallest degree of foundation,' and which he should have hoped would not have obtained the smallest credit. The Prince was perfectly prepared to afford his Majesty and his Majesty's ministers 'the fullest assurances of the utter falsehood of the fact in question, which never had and which common sense must see never could have happened.'

The denial seemed sufficiently emphatic, but Rolle was not satisfied. The matter referred to, he said, had been discussed in newspapers all over the kingdom, and had made an impression on men of all ranks who valued the Constitution. 'The right honourable gentleman had said it was impossible to have happened. They all knew that there were certain laws and Acts of Parliament which forbade it, but though it could not be done under the formal sanction of law there were ways in which it might have taken place . . . and it ought therefore to be cleared up.' Fox at once replied that 'he did not deny the calumny in question merely with regard to the effect of certain existing laws alluded to by the honourable gentleman; but he denied it *in toto*, in point of fact as well as law. The fact not only never could have happened legally, but never did happen in any way whatsoever, and had from the beginning been a base and malicious falsehood.' On being asked whether he said this from direct authority, Fox answered that he 'had spoken from direct authority.' [1]

Whatever may have been his faults in other respects, Fox was at least a man of unquestionable honour, candour, and veracity, while it is unfortunately perfectly

[1] *Parl. Hist.* xxvi. 1064-1070.

consistent with the known character of the Prince of Wales that he should have endeavoured to extricate himself from difficulty and to obtain an increased allowance by denying a marriage which had actually taken place, though it was invalid in the eyes of the law. The immediate impression was very favourable to him.[1] It was believed that he had been grossly calumniated. Pitt, whatever may have been his private sentiments,[2] decorously expressed the 'complete satisfaction' which so explicit a declaration must have given to the whole House; the opposition to an increased allowance was suddenly allayed, and after some negotiations the King was induced to add 10,000*l.* a year from the Civil List to the income of the Prince of Wales,[3] and the House to vote 161,000*l.* for the payment of his debts, besides 20,000*l.* for completing the works at Carlton House. But for the explicit denial of the marriage with Mrs. Fitzherbert which the Prince of Wales had authorised Fox to make, it is tolerably certain that these sums would not have been granted.

It remained to break the transaction to Mrs. Fitzherbert. The story is told by her relative, Lord Stourton, doubtless from information derived from herself. The morning after the denial the Prince 'went up to

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[1] Sir G. Elliot writes: 'I think yesterday was a very good day for the Prince, as the story of Mrs. Fitzherbert was what staggered great numbers, and he offers such unreserved satisfaction on every point which has been started against him, that the natural desire of every man to relieve him from so unbecoming a situation seems now to have nothing to contradict or restrain it.'—*Life of Sir G. Elliot*, i. 157.

[2] It is stated that when Fox made his declaration, Pitt repeated to a neighbour on the Treasury Bench the line from *Othello*, 'Villain, be sure thou prove my love a whore.'

[3] 'The ground,' Elliot writes, 'taken to reconcile this assent of the King's with his former and late positive and decided refusal, is the declaration made by Fox contradicting the story of the marriage.'—*Life of Sir G. Elliot*, i. 160.

her, and, taking hold of both her hands and caressing her, said, "Only conceive, Maria, what Fox did yesterday. He went down to the House and denied that you and I were man and wife. Did you ever hear of such a thing?"' Mrs. Fitzherbert, it is added, made no immediate reply. She never forgave Fox,[1] and appears to have urged the Prince to take some step to procure a disavowal of a declaration which he knew to be false. The Prince naturally avoided an explanation with Fox, but on the morning after Fox's statement he sent for Grey, with whom he was then on intimate terms, told him that Fox had gone too far, and at last with great agitation frankly confessed that a ceremony had taken place.[2] Grey, however, would give him no help. 'Mr. Fox,' he said, 'must unquestionably suppose that he had authority for all he said, and if there had been any mistake it could only be rectified by his Royal Highness speaking to Mr. Fox himself and setting him right on such matters as had been misunderstood between them. No other person can be employed without questioning Mr. Fox's veracity, which nobody, I presume, is prepared to do.' 'This answer,' continued Lord Stourton, 'chagrined, disappointed, and agitated the Prince exceedingly, and after some exclamations of annoyance he threw himself on a sofa muttering, "Well, then, Sheridan must say something."'[3] Sheridan accordingly, in a subsequent discussion, without naming Mrs. Fitzherbert, paid a few vapid and unmeaning compliments to her. His Royal Highness's feelings, he said, had been sufficiently considered, but 'there was another

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[1] Langdale's *Life of Mrs. Fitzherbert*, pp. 29, 30, 123, 124.

[2] Lord Holland's *Memoirs of the Whig Party*, ii. 137–140. Lord Holland was informed of this fact by Grey himself. See also Lord Grey's note in Russell's *Memorials and Correspondence of Fox*, ii. 289.

[3] Langdale's *Life of Mrs. Fitzherbert*, pp. 28–30.

person entitled in every delicate and honourable mind to the same attention,' a person 'whom malice or ignorance alone could attempt to injure, and whose character and conduct claimed and was entitled to the truest respect.'

The subsequent history of this lady was chequered and somewhat singular. More than once in later life George IV. declared that there was not a word of truth in the story of the marriage, though he had himself confessed it to Grey, and though it is established beyond all dispute. There were fortunately no children, and shortly after the denial in Parliament the Prince deserted Mrs. Fitzherbert for a new attachment. Then followed his marriage with Princess Caroline of Brunswick, and then again a new connection with Mrs. Fitzherbert, who is stated to have obtained from Rome an express sanction for consenting to it. It lasted with comparative smoothness for about eight years, and was unbroken during all the time of 'the delicate investigation' into the alleged misdeeds of Queen Caroline. At last the star of Lady Hertford became ascendant and the Prince finally abandoned Mrs. Fitzherbert—characteristically closing his long connection with brutal and unfeeling insult.[1] She survived her husband nearly seven years, dying only in 1837. It is remarkable that both George III. and his Queen treated her with marked kindness and intimacy, clearly showing that they knew of her marriage, and the same feelings were displayed by other members of the royal family, especially by the Duke of York and by William IV. Her modest and amiable character, the decorum of her manners, the sense of her wrongs, the great discretion with which she abstained from urging claims that might have been dangerous to the dynasty, and the influence for good

[1] Langdale's *Life of Mrs. Fitzherbert*, pp. 132–135.

which she seems to have always tried to exercise over her husband, secured for her a degree of respect which might perhaps hardly have been anticipated.[1]

It is stated that the day after Fox had made his declaration in Parliament a gentleman of his acquaintance went up to him at Brooks's and said, 'I see by the papers, Mr. Fox, you have denied the fact of the marriage of the Prince with Mrs. Fitzherbert. You have been misinformed. I was present at that marriage.'[2] Fox perceived that he had been duped, and his situation was as painful and perplexing as could well be conceived. Ought he to leave the House of Commons under the impression of the perfectly false statement which he had unwittingly made? It was a question which affected not only his own honour but also the honour of Mrs. Fitzherbert, who had been cruelly injured by his words. On the other hand, if he stated the facts as they occurred, the revelation of so much baseness might prevent the Prince from ever ascending the throne, and, if it did not do so, it would, at least, overshadow his reign with an enduring cloud of obloquy. It might be contended by strong and plausible reasoning that the Prince had by law forfeited his title to the crown, and

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[1] In the *Diary of Mrs. Harcourt* (the wife of General, afterwards Earl Harcourt, equerry to the King), a portion of which has been privately printed by Mr. Frederick Locker, there is an account of a conversation between the Duke of Gloucester and Mrs. Harcourt about the Prince's affairs. It gives a somewhat different notion of Mrs. Fitzherbert from that which generally prevailed. The Duke said: 'The marriage between the Prince and Mrs. Fitzherbert was without much love on either side. He had his amusements elsewhere, but he had much consideration for her. She was sometimes jealous and discontented; her temper violent, though apparently so quiet. He hoped the Prince would remain in her hands, as she was no political intriguer, and probably if they parted he would fall into worse hands.'—Mrs. Harcourt's *Diary*, p. 41.

[2] Russell's *Life of Fox*, ii. 186.

it was not impossible that this forfeiture might be enforced. The well-known detestation with which the King regarded his eldest son, his equally well-known preference for his second son, the anti-Catholic feeling of the country, the overwhelming power of a Government to which the Prince of Wales was openly opposed, made a change in the succession very possible, and such a change might have led to a new era of disputed succession. Under these circumstances Fox kept silence, but it is stated that he did not speak to the Prince of Wales for more than a year, and that though he afterwards acted with him he never again believed in him.[1]

The question how far considerations of State necessity or of overwhelming political expediency may legitimately deflect or modify our moral judgments, is one of the most difficult in practical ethics. I shall not venture to condemn the silence of Fox, but his subsequent conduct was surely such as no high-minded man would have pursued. In truth, in matters in which women were concerned he was very far from high-minded. He had fully adopted that capricious and fantastic code of fashionable honour which, while condemning some forms of vice with an almost excessive severity, finds little or nothing to censure in the conduct of the man who makes the honour and affections of a woman the sport of his passions and his caprice. The conduct of the Prince could not, indeed, be justified by any code of honour, but Fox never appears to have regarded it with the degree of reprobation which it deserved. He continued to receive letters from the Prince written in a strain of the warmest and most intimate friendship.[2] Any coldness which had arisen between them was in

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[1] Russell's *Life of Fox*, ii. 187.

[2] See Russell's *Memoirs and Correspondence of Fox*, ii. 287-289.

about a year to all appearance completely dispelled, and when the question of the regency arose, the Whig party placed their hopes mainly on the close personal intimacy that subsisted between their leader and the heir to the crown.

During the whole of the summer of 1788 the usually robust health of the King had been visibly impaired, but it was not until October that unmistakable signs appeared of the recurrence of that mental malady with which he had been for a short time afflicted in 1765. The immediate cause appears to have been the injudicious treatment of a severe bilious attack, excessive exercise, and imprudence in keeping on wet stockings during an entire day. During October, however, the King was able to transact public business, though imperfectly and at intervals. On one occasion he had an interview with Pitt at Kew which lasted for three hours and forty minutes, and, according to their invariable custom, both the King and Pitt remained standing the whole time.[1] On the 25th, disquieting rumours having gone abroad, the King endeavoured to check them by holding a levee at St. James's, but the effort was manifestly beyond his strength, and he became rapidly worse. There was a period of abnormal nervous excitement, accompanied by incessant talking, occasional incoherence, a changed voice, and much physical weakness, and at last, on November 5, he burst into such open and violent delirium that it became necessary to place him under strict restraint. The Prince of Wales and the Duke of York at once took up their abode at Windsor. The first belief was that the King was suffering from brain fever, and for several days his death was supposed to be imminent. A speedy death, a speedy recovery, and a prolonged or permanent insanity were, however,

[1] Rose's *Diary*, i. 86.

all possible, and the doubt added enormously to the difficulties of the situation. Parliament must soon meet, but it could not regularly proceed to business without the session being opened by the King or by some commission authorised by him, nor could any Act of Parliament be complete and valid without the royal sanction. Pitt found himself with no precedent to guide him; the King completely incapable of discharging the royal functions; the prospects of his recovery entirely uncertain; the Prince of Wales on the worst terms with his father, his mother, and the ministers.

Cabinet Councils were held at Windsor, and Pitt as well as the Chancellor had more than one interview with the Prince about the measures to be taken for the care of the King. Pitt found the Prince perfectly civil, but the intercourse on both sides was distant and formal, and gave no promise of reconciliation. There were, however, many rumours of a junction of parties, but neither side appears to have greatly desired it. The Prince of Wales regarded Pitt with an intense personal animosity, while Pitt on his side, though he was perfectly prepared for the contingency of his dismissal, was firmly resolved that he would make no overtures to his opponents; that he would not resign his post, and that he would not be the instrument of bringing into office politicians to whom the King was violently hostile. He determined to postpone the Regency as long as it could be done with propriety, and, if the continuance of the King's illness made it necessary, to propose the Prince of Wales as Regent, subject to limitations which were to be determined by Parliament.

Fox was at this time travelling in Italy with Mrs. Armitstead. It is curiously characteristic of his tastes and habits that, although there were then two weekly posts from England to Italy, he had not received a single line from England, from September to November.

He had given no address to his friends, and is said to have only once looked into a newspaper, for the purpose of ascertaining whether he had lost or won his wagers at Newmarket.[1] A messenger despatched by the Duke of Portland found him at Bologna, perfectly ignorant of the King's illness. He at once set out on his return, and, after nine days' incessant travelling, arrived in London on November 24. Sheridan, however, had remained in London during the recess, and as he was very intimate with the Prince of Wales he obtained an ascendency in the councils of Carlton House.[2]

One of the first and most characteristic results of the illness of the King was the treachery of Thurlow, who began to fear that the ministry of Pitt would fall, and who accordingly hastened to secure his own position by a secret negotiation with the Prince and Sheridan. His offer was to declare in favour of an unrestricted regency. His condition was that he should retain the woolsack in the event of a change of Government. The post had been promised or half promised to Lord Loughborough, who had for some years been co-operating with Fox, and attempts were vainly made to satisfy Thurlow with the promise of the Presidency of the Council, but he was inexorable in his demand, and his assistance seemed so important that Sheridan urged that he should be bought at his own price. The Prince

[1] Lady Minto's *Life of Sir G. Elliot*, i. 236–238.

[2] See Rose's *Diary*, i. 88–90. Moore's *Life of Sheridan*. The arguments which probably determined the Government are given very fully in a letter from W. Grenville to Lord Buckingham. *Courts and Cabinets of Geo. III.* i. 448–454. Sir Gilbert Elliot, who was well acquainted with the sentiments of Carlton House, wrote to his wife on November 25: 'The Prince is, I believe, as much determined at present as possible never to have anything to do with Pitt, who was very absurdly arrogant in his good fortune, and insulted the Prince in his manner and conduct whenever he could, even in public and in his presence.'—Lady Minto's *Life of Sir G. Elliot*, i. 238.

consented, and the negotiation was proceeding, when Fox returned to England. Fox, who detested Thurlow, and had a well-merited contempt for his character, acquiesced with great reluctance. 'I have swallowed the pill,' he wrote to Sheridan, 'and a most bitter one it was, and have written to Lord Loughborough, whose answer of course must be consent. . . . I am convinced, after all, that the negotiation will not succeed, and am not sure that I am sorry for it. I do not remember ever feeling so uneasy about any political thing I ever did in my life.' Thurlow as yet refused to commit himself decisively—the course of the King's illness was still much too uncertain—but he had secret interviews with the Prince of Wales, with Sheridan, and with Fox.[1] He at least secured his position in the event of the King's recovery being pronounced hopeless, and in the meantime it was probably through his communications that the Prince obtained his information of the proceedings in the Cabinet relating to the proposed Regency Bill.

Thurlow concealed from his colleagues his interviews with the Whig leaders, and his more confidential interviews with the Prince; but complete secrecy was very difficult to attain. On November 28, before the King was removed from Windsor to Kew, Thurlow visited him in company with Pitt, and Miss Burney has given a curious account of the interview.[2] Pitt was, as

[1] See Lord Loughborough's letter to Sheridan, in Campbell's *Lives of the Chancellors*, vii. 248, 249.

[2] Madame D'Arblay's *Diary*, iv. 337, 338. In a letter from Admiral Payne to Sheridan written on November 24, he says: 'The Prince is to see the Chancellor to-morrow. Due deference is had to our former opinion upon the subject; no courtship will be practised; for the chief object in the visit is to show him the King, who has been worse the two last days than ever.'—Moore's *Life of Sheridan*, ii. 29. Lord Loughborough talks of 'the tenderness he [Thurlow] showed'—'for I am sure it is not

always, composed, and expressed his attachment and respect with simplicity and good feeling, but Thurlow presented the most edifying spectacle of passionate and uncontrollable loyalty. 'He went into the presence of the King with a tremor such as before he had been only accustomed to inspire; and when he came out he was so extremely affected by the state in which he saw his royal master and patron, that the tears ran down his cheeks and his feet had difficulty to support him.' He perhaps a little overacted his part, for his colleagues were quite aware of his character, and they already knew or suspected his treachery.[1] A slight accident, which has been often related, soon after disclosed to

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his character to feel any'—as intended to win the confidence of the Queen.—Campbell's *Lives of the Chancellors*, vii. 249.

[1] On November 25 Lord Bulkeley wrote to Buckingham: 'I heard for certain that the Chancellor, who was suspected of being *rattically* inclined, was firm as a rock, and that the whole Cabinet were determined to die together.'—*Mems. of the Courts and Cabinets of George III.* ii. 15. On November 30, however, Grenville wrote: 'You will have heard in all probability much on the subject of the Chancellor. His situation is a singular one. It is unquestionably true that he has seen Fox, and I believe he has also seen Sheridan repeatedly, and certainly the Prince of Wales. And of all these conversations he has never communicated one word to any other member of the Cabinet. Yet I am persuaded that he has as yet made no terms with them, and that whenever they come to that point they will differ. With this clue, however, you will be at no loss to guess where the Prince acquires his knowledge of the plans of regency which are to be proposed, because, even supposing the Chancellor not to have directly betrayed the individual opinions of his colleagues, yet still his conversation upon these points, in all of which he has explicitly agreed with the opinions of Pitt, must lead to the communication of the plans in agitation. . . . Pitt has been induced, from his regard to the King, to dissemble his knowledge of Thurlow's conduct and to suppress the resentment which it so naturally excites. There is no reason, but the contrary, for believing that any of those who have acted with him are disposed to follow his example. It is universally reprobated and explicitly by them.'—Ibid. pp. 23, 24. See, too, on the secret negotiations of Thurlow with the Prince, Rose's *Diary*, i. 89, 90.

them the relations of Thurlow with the Prince. A council was one day held at Windsor, and Thurlow had been there for some time before his colleagues arrived. When the time for their departure came, the hat of the Chancellor was missing. After a long search a page brought it into the hall where the ministers were still standing, saying with great simplicity, 'My Lords, I found it in the closet of the Prince of Wales.' The confusion of the Chancellor was evident, and his colleagues quite understood the situation. Pitt appears to have said nothing, but he confided the conduct of the regency measures in the House of Lords to Lord Camden.[1]

At the time when the King was struck down by illness, Parliament stood prorogued to November 20, but Pitt on that day procured a further adjournment till December 4. On the 3rd a meeting of the Privy Council was held at Whitehall to inquire into the state of the King. Members of all parties were summoned, and among those who were present were twenty-four who sat on the side of the Opposition.[2] The five physicians who were in attendance were examined upon oath, and they testified that the King was totally incapacitated for transacting public business, that his illness was not incurable, but that it was at present wholly impossible to predict its duration. Next day Parliament met, and, the report of the Privy Council having been laid before it, Pitt moved a new adjournment till the 8th, giving notice at the same time that he would on that day propose the appointment of a committee to search for precedents that were in any degree applicable to the present state of affairs.

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[1] Campbell's *Chancellors*, vii. 250, 251; Stanhope's *Life of Pitt*, i. 397, 398. There is a slightly different version of the anecdote given in Sir C. Lewis's *Administrations of Great Britain*, p. 122.

[2] Tomline, ii. 365.

A sufficient period of deliberation and reflection had thus been secured, and on December 8 the leaders of the two parties had considered, or ought to have considered, fully all the aspects of the question. Pitt opened the proceedings in a tone of the greatest conciliation and candour. A doubt, he said, had been thrown out on the former occasion whether it was a regular and proper thing for Parliament to act in so grave a case merely on the report of the Privy Council, and Fox had expressed his concurrence with the doubt. For his own part, Pitt said, he thought the evidence laid before the House sufficient, but he had no wish to press the point if any member thought differently, and he therefore proposed that the House itself should examine the physicians. Such a course might indeed appear the more expedient as two new physicians—Dr. Willis and Dr. Gisborne—had been called in since the examination by the Privy Council. The readiness with which Pitt accepted the suggestion of the Opposition gave great satisfaction, and on the proposal of Pitt a committee was at once formed for the purpose of examining the physicians, consisting of twenty-one members, nine of whom were taken from the Opposition.

The step was an exceedingly judicious one. It was so managed as to give the strongest impression of candour and of respect for the House of Commons, while it was at the same time of great advantage to the Government. It had already become evident that the issue of the impending contest depended to a great extent on the prevailing belief about the probability of the King's recovery, and the situation had in this respect been much changed by the appearance of Dr. Willis on the scene. This gentleman was a clergyman as well as a physician, and he had for the last twenty-eight years kept an asylum for insane persons in Lin-

colnshire and had treated them with extraordinary success. Like most specialists he had his enemies, and he was considered by some as little better than a mountebank ;[1] but though the other doctors about the King may have ranked higher in their profession, none of them could speak on a question of insanity with so great a weight of experience. Dr. Willis, on seeing the King, at once declared that his recovery was almost certain, and that it was likely to take place in a short time. The management of the case was placed mainly in his hands, and he resided permanently at Kew, while the other doctors only visited the King at intervals. A new treatment was adopted ; it was noticed that Willis at once obtained a complete ascendency over his patient, and some slight improvement was already visible. It was very desirable in the interests of the Government that the exceedingly confident opinion of Dr. Willis should be brought fully before Parliament and the country.[2]

The committee met on the 9th. The evidence of Dr. Willis was almost decisive as to the certainty of the King's speedy recovery. If it were the case of a common man, he said, he would have no doubt whatever, but it was possible that the painful reflections of the King on his own situation, and on the many interests

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[1] *Auckland Correspondence*, ii. 257.

[2] On Dec. 7 (two days after Dr. Willis had his first interview with the King) Grenville wrote to Buckingham : 'It is quite ridiculous to see how angry the Opposition are at the report of the physicians, and particularly at what Warren said, which I understand was very different from what they had expected. They go so far as to say that if Fox had been present he would not have dared to give such an evidence. They hope to mend it by a subsequent examination before a Committee of the House. The object of Willis being examined is so great that I think we shall consent to something of this sort. Not only his opinion will have great weight, but it will also make the others very cautious what they say in opposition to it.'—*Courts and Cabinets of Geo. III.* ii. 36.

depending on him, might, when he began to recover his reason, retard his cure. Signs of convalescence had not yet appeared, but there was everything leading to it, and especially a marked decrease of irritation. When asked about his own experience, Willis answered that of ten patients, brought to him within three months of their being attacked, nine had on an average recovered; that the smallest time of recovery he remembered was six weeks or two months from the patient being brought to him; the longest a year and a half; the average about five months.[1] The other physicians, and especially Dr. Warren, were less sanguine, but they all of them admitted that the King's ultimate recovery was not only possible but probable.

On the 10th the report of the committee was presented to the House, and Pitt observed that it was now fully proved that the King was wholly incapable of transacting the necessary business of his office, and that the time of his recovery was extremely uncertain. Under these grave circumstances it was the duty of Parliament to provide for the government of the country. The point to be agitated was dear to the interests of the people and affected the fundamental principles of our free Constitution, and it was most important that nothing should be done rashly or inconsiderately. He proposed, therefore, that a committee should be appointed to examine and report what precedents there were of measures taken to carry on the government, when the personal exercise of the royal authority had been prevented or interrupted by infancy, sickness, infirmity, or otherwise.

Up to this point the proceedings had been perfectly harmonious, but now the first note of discord was struck. Fox rose, and said that, while it was undoubtedly the

[1] *Courts and Cabinets of Geo. III.* ii. 47.

duty of Parliament to lose no time in providing for the exigency of the situation, the motion for a committee appeared to him wholly unnecessary. It was perfectly known that there was no precedent which could throw light upon the present case. 'The circumstance to be provided for did not depend upon their deliberations as a House of Parliament. It rested elsewhere. There was a person in the kingdom different from any other person that any existing precedents could refer to—an heir apparent of full age and capacity to exercise the royal power. . . . In his firm opinion, his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales had as clear, as express a right to assume the reins of government and exercise the power of sovereignty during the continuance of the illness and incapacity with which it had pleased God to afflict his Majesty, as in the case of his Majesty's having undergone a natural and perfect demise ; and as to this right which he conceived the Prince of Wales had, he was not himself to judge when he was entitled to exercise it ; but the two Houses of Parliament as the organs of the nation were alone qualified to pronounce when the Prince ought to take possession of and exercise his right. . . . His Royal Highness chose rather to wait the decision of Parliament with a patient and due deference to the Constitution, than to urge a claim which he was persuaded could not reasonably be disputed. But ought he to wait unnecessarily? . . . He should not oppose the motion [for a committee], but he thought it his duty to say it was incumbent on the House to lose no time in restoring the third estate.[1]

[1] This phraseology is not historically accurate. The three estates of the realm are not the King, Lords, and Commons, but the Lords Spiritual, the Lords Temporal, and the Commons. (Blackstone, book i. ch. ii. § 2; Stubbs's *Const. Hist.* ii. 182–184.) As, however, the leading statesmen on both sides in the regency debates followed the common usage, and spoke of the

His Royal Highness, he was convinced, must exercise the royal prerogative during, and only during, his Majesty's illness.'[1]

It is said that while Fox was delivering this memorable speech Pitt smiled triumphantly, and, slapping his thigh, exclaimed to a colleague sitting near him, 'I'll *unwhig* the gentleman for the rest of his life.'[2] Nothing, indeed, in the history of parliamentary debate is more striking than the skill with which he availed himself of the opportunity which was given him of turning the feeling of Parliament and country with overwhelming force against his opponents. If any additional reason, he said, was required for the appointment of the committee, the strongest and most unanswerable would be found in the speech of Fox.

'If a claim of right was intimated (even though not formally) on the part of the Prince of Wales to assume the government, it became of the utmost consequence to ascertain from precedent and history whether this claim was founded. If it was, it precluded the House from the possibility of all deliberation on the subject. In the meantime he maintained that it would appear from every precedent and from every page of our history that to assert such a right in the Prince of Wales or anyone else was little less than treason to the Constitution of the country. . . . He pledged himself to this assertion, that in the case of the interruption of the personal exercise of the royal authority without any lawful provision having been made for carrying on the government, it belonged to the other branches of the Legislature, on the part of the nation at large—the body they repre-

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Crown as 'the third estate,' I have thought it best to retain their language, not merely when quoting their words, but also in giving summaries of their arguments.

[1] *Parl. Hist.* xxvii. 706, 707.

[2] Moore's *Life of Sheridan*, ii. 38.

sented—to provide according to their discretion for the temporary exercise of the royal authority in the name and on behalf of the Sovereign in such manner as they should think requisite; and that, unless by their decision, the Prince of Wales had no more right (speaking of strict right) to assume the government than any other individual subject of the country. . . . Neither the whole nor any part of the royal authority could belong to him in the present circumstances unless conferred by the Houses of Parliament.' 'On the interruption of the personal exercise of the royal authority,' he repeated, 'it devolved on the remaining branches of the Legislature, on the part of the people of England, to exercise their discretion in providing a substitute. From the mode in which the right honourable gentleman had treated the subject a new question presented itself, and that of greater magnitude even than the question which was originally before them. . . . The question now was of their own rights, and it was become a doubt, according to the right honourable gentleman's opinion, whether that House had on this important occasion a deliberative power. . . . Let them proceed, therefore, to ascertain their rights. . . . On their proceeding depended their own interests and the interests and honour of a sovereign deservedly the idol of the people.' [1]

These two speeches indicate clearly the grounds of the controversy, and each speaker in the course of the same debate added a few arguments or explanations. In reply to Pitt's assertion that to deny the right and the sole competence of Parliament to appoint a regent was a kind of treason to the Constitution, Fox retorted that the two Houses acting without the concurrence and assent of the third estate were constitutionally incompetent not only to limit and set bounds to the executive

[1] *Parl. Hist.* xxvii. 709–711.

power, but even to perform the most ordinary legislative act. It may be doubted, indeed, whether under such circumstances they ought not to be called a convention rather than a parliament. As all the world knew, he was no advocate for the exploded doctrine of indefeasible right. He admitted, and asserted, that political power in all its grades was of the nature of a trust, but by the law of England the Crown was hereditary, and he inferred by analogy that the exercise of the sovereign power was hereditary also. 'He had said before that the Prince's right to the regency was indisputable. He would now go farther and assert that it so belonged of right during what he would call the civil death of the King, that it could not be more completely or legally his by the ordinary and natural demise of the Crown. The Prince, therefore, who maintained that right and yet forbore to assume it, was entitled to the thanks of his country. Actuated by a respectful regard to the principles that had placed his illustrious family upon the throne, he waited to be informed of the sense of the people, before he would assume what no man had a right to take from him, what the law and the Constitution had given him a right to take without waiting for a declaration of either House of Parliament. It was not decent, therefore, to trifle with a Prince whose conduct was marked with such meritorious forbearance, by instituting an inquiry into precedents that had nothing to do with the case. It was the duty of the two Houses to restore the royal authority, and that immediately. . . . If they took advantage of the present calamitous state of the country to arrogate to themselves a power to which they had no right, they acted contrary to the spirit of the Constitution and would be guilty of treason.'

Pitt also added a few words, but it was only for the purpose of reiterating and defining as clearly as possible

the question at issue. According to his own doctrine, 'to make a provision for the executive power of the Government during an interruption of the personal exercise of the royal authority, by sickness, infirmity, or otherwise, rested with the remaining existing branches of the Legislature, and was a matter entirely in their discretion.' According to Fox, 'the two Houses had no such discretion, but his Royal Highness had a claim to the exercise of the sovereign power which superseded the right of either House to deliberate on the subject.' [1]

Fox was evidently startled at the opinion which showed itself both in Parliament and the country, and without abandoning the substance of his contention he endeavoured to attenuate the difference of principle, while Pitt showed an evident desire to aggravate it. It had never, Fox said, been his intention to assert or to imply that the Prince of Wales had the right to assume and exercise the power of the regency without the adjudication of the two Houses of Parliament. 'If, indeed, there was no Parliament either sitting or existing, it would have been the duty of the Prince of Wales to have called a convention of the Lords and Commons, to whom the cause of their being called might have been explained, and by whom his right, and the circumstances in which it originated, might be recognised, and the two Houses being met by him as exercising the delegated functions of the royal power would then become a legal parliament.' But under all other circumstances it was for the two Houses to take the first step. Their vote must precede the exercise of the powers of the regency, and it was therefore wholly untrue that his doctrine superseded or annulled their authority. At the same time Fox contended that the right to exercise the royal authority with all its functions attached to the

[1] *Parl. Hist.* xxvii. 711–713.

Prince of Wales from the moment of his father's incapacity, by virtue of the law which made the sovereign power in England hereditary and not elective, and that the function of Parliament in the matter was a function not of election but of adjudication. The two Houses did not give the Prince his right, but they were the appointed tribunal which could alone pronounce with authority that the occasion had arisen for its exercise.

He acknowledged, however, that he found more difference of opinion than he had expected about the right of the Prince, and he found that much of it arose from very subtle distinctions that were drawn between the terms right and claim—distinctions which were to his mind more equivocal than solid or substantial, and which rested upon arguments which he confessed himself too dull to comprehend. He found it admitted on the other side that the Prince must be made Regent—that his claim was irresistible. The difference between an 'inherent right' and an 'irresistible claim' to the regency seemed to him imperceptible, or at least 'extremely minute.' Both parties, in fact, agreed that the Prince of Wales must be Regent, and that a parliamentary vote must precede his installation. The Prince had put forward no claim of right, and although Fox believed in that right and had stated it as an argument in debate, he had spoken only as a private member and in no sense as a representative of the Prince. 'What signified differences about abstract points when the substance was indisputable?' It was extremely desirable that the proceedings of Parliament in this grave crisis should be unanimous, extremely undesirable that Parliament should be invited to vote without any necessity on a dangerous and disputable question of inherent right. 'His opinion was that the Prince of Wales ought to be declared Regent and capable of exercising all the royal authority in the same manner and to the same

extent as it would have been exercised by his Majesty had he been able to discharge the functions of the sovereign authority.'

The assertion of Fox that he had not raised the question of right on the authority of the Prince of Wales was strengthened a few days later by a remarkable speech of the Duke of York in the House of Lords. He expressed his great desire to avoid any discussion of so fruitless and unnecessary a question as the abstract right of the Prince of Wales to the regency. In point of fact no claim to such a right had been asserted by the Prince or even been hinted at by him, and he felt a full and most assured confidence that 'his Royal Highness understood too well the sacred principles which seated the House of Brunswick on the throne of Great Britain, ever to assume or exercise any power, be his claim what it might, that was not derived from the will of the people expressed by their representatives and their Lordships in Parliament assembled.' These, he stated, he knew to be also the sentiments of his royal brother.

The inexpediency of pronouncing on the question of abstract right was also maintained by Lord North in a very admirable speech. 'What good,' he said, 'can arise from deciding the present question?' After the express declaration made elsewhere on the part of the Prince of Wales, there could be no possible danger to the rights of Parliament, and the House would do well to follow the example of the statesmen of the Revolution, who proceeded without delay to take practical measures to place the Government on a regular footing without discussing speculative and abstract questions. Without the third branch of the Legislature they had no power, and they ought, therefore, immediately and in the shortest way to fill up the vacancy. 'Sitting in a maimed and imperfect Legislature, they ought to con-

fine themselves strictly to the necessity of the case, since every step they proceeded beyond that necessity was a step in error.' 'They ought to go straight to their object.' 'Nominate a Regent, and then when the third branch of the Legislature was complete they would become a Parliament, perfect in all its constitutional forms, and might legally pass any laws either of limitation, restriction, or of any other kind.'

Pitt, however, emphatically refused to adopt this course, and he insisted upon bringing the constitutional question to a direct vote. His opponent, he said, 'had asserted that the Prince of Wales had a right to exercise the royal authority under the present circumstances of the country, but that it was a right not in possession until the Prince could exercise it on what the right honourable gentleman called adjudication of Parliament. He on his part denied that the Prince of Wales had any right whatever, and upon that point the right honourable gentleman and he were still at issue, and this issue, in his opinion, must be decided before they proceeded one step farther.' 'It was impossible to let the question of right which had been started undergo admission without its being fully discussed and decided. It was a question that shook the foundation of the Constitution, and upon the decision of which all that was dear to us as Britons depended. It was their first duty to decide whether there was any right in the Prince of Wales to claim the exercise of the royal power under any circumstances of the country, independent of the actual demise of the Crown.' 'The danger of the question originated in its having been stirred, not in its being decided,' and it was the Opposition and not the Government which had raised it. To leave unsettled such a claim affecting the fundamental rights of Parliament would be highly dangerous, and it was very far from being a merely abstract or speculative opinion.

The whole question of the power of Parliament to limit the regency depended upon the decision on the question of right. 'If a right existed to represent the King it must be perfect, admitting of no modification whatever.' In that case the two Houses had no right to restrict the power of the Regent, without his own consent. Their function was to adjudge, and not to deliberate or impose conditions. If, on the other hand, it was the legal right of Parliament to constitute the regency, they could discuss the powers with which the Regent should be invested, and decide how much of the royal prerogative should be delegated, and how much it was prudent to reserve. After passing a resolution, therefore, asserting that the King was incapable of discharging his royal functions, Parliament was asked to pass a second resolution copied in parts from the Bill of Rights, and stating 'that it was the right and duty of the Lords spiritual and temporal, and Commons of Great Britain now assembled, and lawfully, fully and freely, representing all the estates of the people of this nation, to provide the means of supplying the defect of the personal exercise of the royal authority arising from his Majesty's indisposition in such a manner as the exigency of the case may appear to require.'

Although the debates on the question of right extended to great length, and had much constitutional importance, the arguments which were really relevant and valuable lie within a narrow compass, and several that were advanced with a great parade of learning may be very summarily dismissed. Little or no weight can be attached to the argument drawn by Lord Loughborough from the fact that the King and the Prince of Wales are in some cases considered by the law as one, that the Prince of Wales may proceed in an action and claim judgment as King, that it is high treason to attempt his life. Nor were the few precedents of

regencies that were adduced from the earlier periods of English history deserving of more attention. They were derived from times of semi-barbarism and violence, when the Constitution was almost unformed, when the balance of its powers was completely undetermined, and in no one case had there been a Prince of Wales of full age at the time when his father was incapacitated. Constitutional precedents, indeed, are very rarely of any real value if they are taken from an earlier period than the Revolution of 1688. The precedent in the reign of Henry VI. was most relied on, for in that case there was a king who was incapacitated by imbecility, and a regency which was both ratified and limited by Act of Parliament. It was an ill-omened precedent, for it had been a chief cause of the Wars of the Roses, but the simple fact that the House of Lords alone selected the Regent is sufficient to show how inapplicable it was to the conditions of modern politics. The Duke of York on this occasion accepted the office of 'Protector of the Realm' in obedience to the wish of the peerage, in whom, by reason of the King's infirmity, 'resteth the exercise of his authority,' and he requested the advice and assistance of the Lords and a definition of his authority. It is true that the resolution of the Lords defining his position and power was subsequently embodied in a Bill which received the assent of the Commons and duly became law, but the whole proceeding shows a conception of the Constitution altogether different from that of modern times.[1] 'Were the rights of the House of Commons,' asked Fox when speaking of this precedent, 'and its proceedings in one of the most difficult moments that had ever occurred, to be maintained and vindicated by the example of the House of Lords, at a time when that House of Lords had the

[1] See Stubbs's *Constitutional History*, iii. 179, 180.

complete dominion of the executive government, which they exercised with no unsparing hand; at a time when the rights of the Commons House of Parliament were so ill understood and so weakly sustained that the Speaker was actually imprisoned on commitment of the House of Lords?' The more recent conduct of the Convention Parliament, in calling William and Mary to the throne by an address, might furnish a convenient model, but scarcely an argument or a precedent, for the interruption of the exercise of the royal power by the flight of James II. had no real analogy to that which had now taken place.

The question, in truth, was one on which both law and precedent were silent, and it could only be argued by deductions from a few well-known and simple maxims of the Constitution. The English monarchy is at once hereditary and parliamentary, and the Whigs maintained that these two characteristics were best recognised by their doctrine that when the King is incapacitated from discharging the functions of his office, the heir to the crown has a right, if of full age and capacity, to assume the sovereign authority as in the case of his father's death, but only during the period of his father's incapacity, and not until he had been called upon to do so by the two Houses of Parliament. The crown of England—and therefore, they maintained, the executive power and government of the country—is hereditary and not elective, and the maxim that the King never dies implies that there can be no break in the hereditary sovereign authority. In cases when the royal line has become extinct, or when the Sovereign by infringing the original contract between the King and the people has abdicated the throne, it is no doubt true that the two Houses of Parliament have a right to supply the deficiency. In all other cases the law either expressly or by a clear analogy pointed out the suc-

cessor, and the principle of heredity must operate. Nor has this doctrine the smallest affinity to that of the divine right of kings. Pitt said that the question was whether the regency was a right or a trust. Fox answered that according to the doctrine established at the Revolution all political power, including that of the Sovereign himself, is a trust, and may be resumed if it is essentially abused. The regency like the monarchy is unquestionably a trust, and on that very ground he urged 'the Prince's right to be hereditary, conceiving an hereditary succession the best security to the people for the due discharge and faithful execution of the important trust vested by them in their governors.' Hereditary constitutional monarchy had been deliberately adopted in England as the form of government most fitted to secure the liberties and happiness of the people, and in such a government it is as unconstitutional to introduce the principle of election into the first branch of the Legislature as it would be to introduce the principle of heredity into the third. The assertion of Pitt that during the King's incapacity the undoubted heir to the throne, being of full age and capacity, 'has no more right to exercise the powers of government than any other person in these realms,' was an outrage on the Constitution and on the feelings of the people. If Pitt doubted it, let him throw this assertion into the form of a motion and ask Parliament to vote it. He knew well that in spite of his great majorities he dared not venture on the experiment. An elective regency, with the two Houses of Parliament as the electors, was essentially opposed to the theory of hereditary monarchy, and it would fundamentally change the Constitution of the country during periods when the King was incapacitated. It made the sovereign authority during these periods elective. It invested the two Houses with the power of a Polish Diet. Par-

liament might elect two regents. It might elect a new regent every year. It might create a purely aristocratic form of government, like that of the Mahrattas. It might pass over the royal family and invest with the sovereign power an ordinary subject, a foreigner or a Catholic, and a regent unconnected with the royal family would be competent in the name of the incapacitated Sovereign, and during the lifetime of a Prince of Wales of full age and capacity, to give the royal sanction to a law changing the order of succession.

And what was the body for which Pitt claimed this power of transforming the government, suspending or transferring the succession of an hereditary monarchy, placing a person in the situation of king without the full royal power? It is undoubtedly within the power and option of Parliament, acting with the royal sanction, to alter the succession to the throne and to remodel the entire Constitution. But the two Houses acting without the royal sanction have no legislative power whatever. They cannot legally pass so much as a turnpike Bill. This is one of the clearest and most indisputable principles of the Constitution, and it is so jealously guarded by the law, that an Act of Charles II. has made any person who in writing or by word of mouth asserted that two branches of the Legislature had the power and efficacy of all three, liable to the penalties of *præmunire*. With what reason then, with what plausibility, could it be contended that a Parliament thus maimed and imperfect was competent to elect or appoint a regent, and by elaborate restrictive legislation to divide, limit, and portion out the sovereign authority? The simplest, shortest, and most constitutional method of extricating the country from its present difficulty was an address of the two Houses calling on the Prince of Wales to exercise the royal functions which were at present eclipsed. The legislative machinery would then be

restored, and if it were thought necessary to introduce limitations into the regency there would be a Legislature competent to enact them.

This reasoning appears to me extremely powerful, and the theory of Fox was, as is well known, actually adopted in Ireland. The Irish Parliament, having accepted on the authority of the English Parliament the fact of the King's incapacity, presented an address to the Prince of Wales requesting him to assume in Ireland the suspended functions of royalty in the name of his father and during the period of his father's incapacity. If the Prince of Wales had been popular and trusted, if he had been in harmony with the English ministry, or if he had even been prepared to leave matters unchanged till his father's illness had taken a decisive turn, it is probable that a similar course would have been adopted in England, and that no one would have found anything in it dangerous to the liberties of the nation. But personal and party interests of the most powerful nature were involved in the decision, and the regency question from the very beginning produced in England the keenest of party conflicts. The popularity of the King had since the defeat of the Coalition been steadily rising, and the calamity which had struck him down had very naturally produced an outburst of the deepest compassion and loyalty, while Pitt still maintained an undiminished ascendency. The commercial and business classes, who were in general little concerned with party conflicts, believed that his fall would be a serious blow to national credit and prosperity;[1] and the great masses of the people regarded him with an enthusiasm which even his father had scarcely excited. 'Pitt,' wrote a very able member of the Opposition with great bitterness, 'is the only object the nation can perceive and the only thing

[1] Buckingham's *Courts and Cabinets*, ii. 17.

they think valuable in the world, and I rather think they would be content and pleased to set aside the whole royal family, with the Crown and both Houses of Parliament, if they could keep him by it.'[1] On the other hand, the character of the Prince of Wales was already deeply stained, and he was known to be in open hostility to his father and his father's ministry, and in constant communication with an unpopular Opposition. It was his obvious duty, and indeed interest, in assuming the regency to maintain the existing political situation unchanged during the very few months which were likely to elapse before the King's illness took a decisive turn. It was well known, however, that he was determined not to take this course, that his first act of power was likely to be to dismiss Pitt and summon Fox to his councils, and that Fox was perfectly prepared under these circumstances to accept office.[2]

The contrast between the two parties was manifestly capable of being employed, if judiciously managed, in a manner that would enlist an overwhelming stress of popular favour in the cause of the Government. On the one side, it was said, was a virtuous King struck down by a terrible, though, it was believed, only a temporary, calamity; and a young minister of unimpeachable character and splendid genius, who had enjoyed to the last the full confidence of his Sovereign, who was the idol both of Parliament and of the nation, and who was now endeavouring to fulfil the wishes and to protect the interests of his incapacitated master. On the other side was a profligate and undutiful son, eager to climb to power and determined to bring into office men whom his sick father abhorred, and whom the nation had a few years before indignantly rejected.

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[1] *Life of Sir G. Elliot*, i. 248.
[2] Fox's *Correspondence*, ii. 299, 300.

Nor was it so certain that their tenure of office would be a brief one, even in the event of the King's speedy recovery. It was still the popular belief that the India Bill of the Coalition Ministry of 1784 had been a bold and skilful attempt of the ascendant party to secure for itself such an amount of permanent patronage and power that it might almost balance the authority of the Crown. These very men were now again on the threshold of office. If through the illness of the King they obtained, though only for a few months, uncontrolled power, might they not, it was asked, in another form resume their enterprise, fill the House of Lords with their creatures, distribute among their followers so many great and permanent places of emolument, patronage and influence, that it would become very difficult for the Sovereign on his recovery to displace them? Under such circumstances there was a wide and general feeling that while the claim of the Prince of Wales to exercise the regency could not be passed by, his power should be at least carefully defined and restricted, and every argument which supported the right of Parliament to impose such restrictions was accepted with delight.

As we have already seen, the difference of opinion did not openly break out in Parliament till December 10, but the letters of Grenville to his brother the Marquis of Buckingham, who was at this time Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, show clearly that for some weeks before that date the contest had been violently raging. These letters, being written by a minister, are strongly coloured with party feeling, but they are the letters of a very acute judge, who had more than common means of information and who was writing in strict confidence and with perfect sincerity. As early as November 15 he was convinced, from the Prince's general demeanour, that he was determined to dismiss Pitt without hesitation, and two days later he mentions that the accounts

of the probable gravity of the King's illness were very opposite, being 'strongly tinctured by the wishes of those who sent them;' and that although on reflection the idea of refusing to the Regent the power of dissolving Parliament was probably impracticable, other limitations were likely to be imposed which would render all negotiations impossible. A few days later he says that the language of the Opposition seemed to point to a coalition, but that no offers had as yet been made, and that 'the conduct of the Prince of Wales marked a desire of avoiding Pitt.' 'Since there had been an appearance of amendment, the Opposition have taken inconceivable pains to spread the idea that the King's disorder is incurable.' 'The indecency of any language held on your side of the water [in Ireland],' he says in another letter, 'cannot exceed that of the universal tone of opposition within the last four or five days. So long as they considered the case desperate, they were affecting a prodigious concern and reverence for the King's unhappy situation. Now that people entertain hopes of his recovery they are using the utmost industry to combat this idea, circulating all the particulars of everything which he does or says under his present circumstances and adding the most outrageous falsehoods.'[1]

The Prince of Wales was accused of the grossest misconduct—introducing Lord Lothian into the King's room when it was darkened in order that he might hear his ravings at a time when they were at the worst, drinking and singing with his companions when his father's illness was at its height, openly and on all occasions displaying his political bias.

'The behaviour of the two Princes,' Grenville writes

[1] Buckingham's *Courts and Cabinets of Geo. III.* ii. 3–10.

on December 7, 'is such as to shock every man's feelings. What do you think of the Duke of York's having a meeting of the Opposition at his house on Thursday, before the House of Lords met, and then going down there to hear the examinations read? After that they closed the day by both going in the evening to Brooks's. The truth is that the Duke is entirely in his brother's hands, and that the latter is taking inconceivable pains to keep him so. The Opposition were already strongly supporting the physicians who took the most unfavourable view of the King's disorder, and doing everything in their power to discredit the physicians who took the more sanguine view. 'There seems great reason to believe that the Prince of Wales is inclined to go to all lengths to which that party are pushing him.' 'The prevailing idea seems to be that of a general dismission, and of an immediate dissolution of Parliament.'

It was confidently stated that the future Administration was already settled in almost all its details. Another report, which was assiduously spread by the Opposition, was that the Prince of Wales was determined to refuse the regency if it was clogged with restrictions. 'By such a step,' Grenville wrote, 'the Prince will do himself a permanent mischief which he will never be able to repair, and which we shall probably, all of us, have much reason to regret. It is quite clear, that having once proposed these restrictions, as thinking them necessary for the interest of the King (and on that ground only could we propose them), no other motive whatever can be a justification for abandoning them.' The alleged threat of the Prince, however, is probably 'nothing more than a bully intended to influence votes in the House of Commons. If, however, he should be so desperate, I should hope there would be every reason to believe that the Queen would be induced to take the regency in order to prevent the King's hands from

being fettered for the remainder of his life.' It was probable, however, that the Prince would accept the regency on the terms proposed, that the measure would be carried through Parliament by about January 10 or 12, and that the ministers would then be immediately dismissed.[1]

Grenville, however, had little fear for the ultimate result of the conflict, and his letters show how day after day the tide of popular feeling was rising. On the 20th of November he wrote: 'There seems to be just such a spirit and zeal gone forth among Pitt's friends as one would most desire, and whatever is now the event of this anxious moment, I am persuaded you will see him increase from it in point of character and lose little in point of strength.' 'My opinion,' wrote another correspondent on the 25th, 'is that the . . . present Administration will retire (if so necessitated) merely to return to power on the shoulders of the nation.' 'If I am not mistaken,' wrote Grenville on the 30th, 'a storm is rising that they [the Opposition] little expect, and the sense of the country instead of being nearly as strong as in 1784 will be much stronger. But the party in general are so hungry and impatient that I think they will act upon the better judgment of their leaders, and prevent them from doing anything which may allow a moment's delay.' 'If they do dissolve Parliament,' he wrote on December 4, 'in such a moment as this, when the physicians concur in declaring the King's recovery probable, I am persuaded the cry will be as strong as it was in 1784.' 'We receive every day new professions of attachment,' he wrote on the 9th. 'There is every reason to believe that the country will continue entirely with us, and

[1] Buckingham's *Courts and Cabinets of Geo. III.* ii. 12, 25, 32, 36, 37, 40, 41.

that addresses will be presented from all parts to the Regent to continue the government.'[1]

All these letters were written before the conflict in Parliament began. The declaration by Fox, on the 10th, of the Prince of Wales's right, immensely strengthened the Government, and, whatever may be thought of its constitutional character, there can be no question that it was an enormous tactical error. The letters of the Government partisans show clearly the delight with which on their side of the House it was received. 'Of the momentous business opened last night,' wrote Sir William Young the day after the debate, 'I can only say that our astonishment is only to be equalled by the spirits we are in on viewing the grounds Mr. Fox has abandoned to us and left our own. . . . Talbot, who made one of my morning's levee, told me that at White's last night all was hurra! and triumph.' It was said that Fox, 'having on a former occasion sought to trespass on the royal just prerogative, had now completed his attack on the Constitution, in denying the rights of Lords and Commons.' 'Looking back to the history of this man of the people,' continues Young, 'and to his present conduct, in despite of his talents of logical discrimination, I begin almost to doubt whether his weakness or profligacy is transcendent.' Grenville was almost equally emphatic: 'You will be as much surprised as I was,' he wrote, 'to find that the motion of the Prince of Wales's right was brought forward yesterday by Fox in the House of Commons. It was a matter of no less astonishment to many of his own friends. . . . One should lose oneself in conjecture by attempting to find out what motive can have induced him to take exactly the most unpopular ground on

[1] Buckingham's *Courts and Cabinets of Geo. III.* ii. 10, 17, 24, 32, 41.

which their side of the question can be rested. . . . Only think of Fox's want of judgment to bring himself and his friends into such a scrape as he has done, by maintaining a doctrine of higher Tory principle than could have been found anywhere since Sir Robert Sawyer's speeches.'[1]

The matter was made considerably worse by Sheridan, who a few days later, while asserting the right of the Prince of Wales to the unrestricted regency, reminded the House of 'the danger of provoking that Prince to assert his right.' It was such a blunder, said Grenville, in relating the scene, 'as I never knew any man of the meanest talents guilty of before. During the whole time that I have sat in Parliament I never remember such an uproar as was raised by his threatening,'[2] and Pitt carried the House with him when he designated such language as 'an indecent menace thrown out to awe and influence their proceedings.' 'To assert the inherent right of the Prince of Wales to assume the government,' he said in another speech, 'is virtually to revive those exploded ideas of the divine and indefeasible authority of princes which have so justly sunk into contempt and almost oblivion. Kings and princes derive their power from the people, and to the people alone through the organ of their representatives does it appertain to decide in cases for which the Constitution has made no specific or positive provision.'[3]

These were words well fitted to waken an echo in the country. Placards soon appeared in the streets containing passages from the rival speeches, headed: 'Fox for the Prince's prerogative and Pitt for the privileges of Parliament and liberties of the nation.'[4]

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[1] *Courts and Cabinets of Geo. III.* ii. 49, 50, 53, 54.
[2] Ibid. p. 56. [3] Ibid. p. 39. [4] Ibid. p. 58.

By a strange and unexampled fortune Pitt was able for the second time to constitute himself on the most popular grounds the champion of the Tory King, to appeal both to the special advocates of the royal prerogative and to the special advocates of the democratic elements in the Constitution as the most faithful exponent of their respective principles. For the second time Fox, whose position depended wholly on the fidelity with which he advocated civil and religious liberty, was suspected by the nation of sacrificing the principles of the Constitution to the interests of his party. With a tact that never failed, with an eloquence that has seldom been surpassed, with a logical discrimination little if at all inferior to that of his adversary, Pitt defended the far more popular doctrine, that under existing circumstances the two Houses had full discretion to elect and limit the Regent. The temporary exercise of royal authority on behalf of the Sovereign, he argued, is an essentially different thing from the possession of the throne. The throne is full. No one without treason can say that it can be vacant in the lifetime of a King who has not forfeited his right, and it is no less unconstitutional to say that any other person during the lifetime of the King has an inherent right to assume the royal authority. The hereditary right to exercise the royal functions, like every other hereditary right, can only come into force on the death of the person in possession. The doctrine that the Prince of Wales has a right when of full age to exercise the royal authority during his father's incapacity is perfectly new. There is not a trace of it in the statute book. No lawyer in any former age has mentioned it as part of the common law. No writer on the Constitution has asserted it, and there is not the smallest evidence that it had ever been advanced in any of the many earlier parliamentary proceedings relating to

regencies. However imperfect might be the precedents that have been adduced, they at least all pointed to parliamentary limitations, and the precedent of Henry VI. was very closely applicable. The King being incapable, an Act of Parliament appointed the Duke of York Protector and Regent, but it at the same time recognised the future claim to the regency of the Prince of Wales, who was at this time only one year old, and by a reversionary patent it settled what should be his situation and the extent of the powers with which he should be invested when he came of age. If this transaction showed that the Prince of Wales in the opinion of that Parliament was the natural person to hold the regency, it showed also that he was not considered entitled to assume it as of inherent right. 'To the person of the King who wears the crown is certainly confined all the royal authority of the Constitution, and in his name, even during the existence of the regency, must all public business be transacted.' 'His political capacity remains as entire and as perfect as ever, though from a natural incapacity he cannot act.'

The task to be accomplished, therefore, is not to make a king, but to revive or give efficiency to the suspended action of the third estate. The case is unprovided for by law, and for that reason the duty and the right belong to the nation at large, which is the ultimate source of all political power, and which is represented by the two Houses of Parliament. 'Though the third estate of the Legislature may be deficient, yet the organs of speech of the people remained entire in their representation by the Houses of Lords and Commons, through which the sense of the people may be taken. The Lords and Commons represent the whole estates of the people, and with them it rested as a right to provide for the deficiency of the third branch of the

Legislature whenever a deficiency arose.' The circumstances are not the same as those which followed the abdication of James II. Then the throne was vacant. Now the throne is full, and the King's political capacity is whole and entire, though in fact the functions of the Executive Government are for the time suspended. But in one respect there is an undoubted resemblance. It is as impossible to abide by the Act of Charles II. now as in the time of the Revolution. Then it was impossible on account of the absence of the King. Now it is impossible through the act of God. The King's actual consent cannot be obtained, and if Fox's claim for the Prince of Wales were admitted, it would not solve the difficulty. 'Was the Regent so appointed to act in his own name or in that of the King? One or the other he must do. If in his own name he dethroned the King. If in the name of the King it must be without his consent.'

It remained, then, for the two Houses to provide a temporary substitute for the King's assent, and to do so deviating as little as possible from the forms of the Constitution. No legislative act can be done without the formal sanction of this assent, and no person can take upon him to give that assent except by the direction and authority of the two Houses, who have a right in the present emergency to act for the King. What, then, are the means by which the King exercised his parliamentary prerogative when he did not exercise it personally? The legal and constitutional mode was by issuing letters patent under the Great Seal. 'The Great Seal,' said Lord Camden, 'was the high instrument by which the King's fiat was irrevocably given; it was the mouth of the royal authority, the organ by which the Sovereign spoke his will.' The impress of the Great Seal is the form and expression of the King's assent. It is the final act that gives every legislative

measure its validity and makes it part of the statute law of the land. Pitt now proposed that the two Houses should put this Great Seal in commission, and should authorise that commission to affix it to the Bill which was to be passed, creating and defining the regency.

By this means, he contended, the third estate would be restored to action with as little violence as possible to the Constitution, and Parliament would again become a perfect legislative body. 'The use of the King's name without his consent,' he said, 'had been asserted to be a gross and clumsy fiction, but by that fiction the courts of law were now upheld. That fiction was the support of hereditary monarchy so strenuously argued for. The grand principle and foundation on which hereditary monarchy had rested was the political capacity of the King ever remaining entire, and it could never be set aside while living and not having forfeited the crown. That was the grand principle that supported hereditary right. What else could have protected the infant monarch in a cradle, or the infirm, diseased old king on his bed of sickness?'

It followed from these arguments that it was the right and duty of the two Houses to determine what portion of the royal authority should be conferred upon the Regent, and the principles on which they should proceed were very simple. Nothing should be granted that was unnecessary for the efficiency and dignity of the temporary government which was to be created, or that could by any possibility restrict or endanger the power of the recovered King. On these lines the ministers were resolved to act. The question of right must first be determined. The ministers would then introduce a Regency Bill accompanied by such limitations as they deemed necessary or expedient in the interests of the Sovereign, who, though for a time

struck down by illness, was still unquestionably on the throne and still unquestionably their master.

Such is, I think, a complete summary of the arguments urged by Pitt and his colleagues on this great constitutional question, and such were the doctrines which they induced Parliament to affirm. It is evident that the weakest part of this reasoning is that relating to the employment of the Great Seal. The phantom king which was thus created was denounced as one of the most formidable innovations ever made upon the Constitution, and very eminent modern lawyers have adopted this view. Which doctrine, it was asked, is more in harmony with the spirit of the Constitution, that which supposes the undoubted heir to an hereditary throne to possess when of full age a natural right to act for his father during the period of his father's incapacity, or that which authorises the other two estates to create a fictitious king, the shadow and the expression of their own will? If a fiction of this nature might be tolerated in order to give a semblance of regularity to purely formal and undisputed proceedings, ought it to be made use of to determine a constitutional question of the gravest moment, and involving issues of the most disputable character? The essential idea of the third estate is that it is something independent of the other two, that it is invested with prerogatives of its own, that it has the power of dissent as well as assent. 'When the plan of the Government was carried out,' said Lord North, 'there would not be three estates—there would be only two, the Lords and Commons and their deputy—in fact, therefore, the whole Legislature would consist of Lords and Commons only. The mode now proposed by the resolution before the House was to set up a person to represent the royal person without any deliberative power, with only a ministerial authority, a tool of their own, a creature of the two Houses, obliged to act in

subservience to them, without discretion, without the power to dissolve or any of the other functions of the third estate.' 'The third estate to be set up on the present occasion,' said Fox, 'was something with no will of its own, no discretion, but acted merely as the two Houses thought proper. It was a mere creature of theirs, and if resorted to once, might be resorted to again and again.' 'In despite of the statute of Charles II.,' said Burke, 'which made such a declaration liable to the penalties of *præmunire*, the two Houses had declared their right to legislate.' 'It was intended,' he continued, caricaturing Lord Thurlow, 'to set up a man with black eyebrows and a large wig, a kind of scarecrow to the two Houses, who was to give a fictitious assent in the royal name; and this to be binding on the people at large! . . . They declared their positive determination to elect a creature of their own, and to invest it with the insignia but without any of the intrinsic power of royalty. . . . He for his part disclaimed all allegiance to such a political monster. . . . This farce reminded him of a priest among savages who raised an idol and directed its worship, merely that he might secure to himself the meat that was offered as a sacrifice.'

The force of these considerations appears to me undeniable. The precedent established was a revolutionary one, and the two Houses, as Burke truly said, acted like an 'aristocratic republic.' It is probable that if England should ever again pass through a period of revolution, and if it should be thought desirable to throw over that revolution a colour of precedent and legality, this page of history will not be forgotten. The best that can be said of the device which was adopted is that it was employed only until the regency had been created and defined, and that without some such contrivance it would have been impossible to establish the limitations

which both Parliament and the country thought necessary. It was said to have been devised and it was chiefly defended by Sir John Scott, afterwards Lord Eldon, the most typical and unbending of Tory lawyers. The retirement of Lord Mansfield in the June of this year from the office of Chief Justice of King's Bench had been followed by a series of promotions, in the course of which Scott became Solicitor-General, and in the debates on the regency he was a conspicuous defender of the Government.

Another and still more prominent lawyer had also begun to throw himself decisively into the same scale. The secret overtures of Thurlow to the Prince of Wales had been intended to secure his position at a time when it was the prevailing opinion among the best judges that the recovery of the King was improbable. The evidence, however, of Dr. Willis soon modified his course. On December 11 Lord Loughborough, who was throughout the chief legal adviser of the Whigs, maintained in an elaborate speech the inherent right of the Prince to the regency, and it was necessary for the Chancellor to answer him. He dissented from his view, but he did so in terms that were studiously moderate and temporising, dwelling mainly on the danger of disunion and the uselessness of prematurely raising questions of principle. The debate, wrote Lord Bulkeley to Buckingham, 'had one good effect, that the Chancellor opened enough of his sentiments to show that he means to stand by his colleagues.' 'He seems very sour and crusty and certainly does not like Pitt, but I cannot believe he will do otherwise than right on this momentous occasion.'[1] Thurlow, however, can hardly have failed to be conscious that while he would be inevitably distrusted and disliked by the Whigs, he had gone so

[1] *Courts and Cabinets of Geo. III.* ii. 52.

far that his position would be in much danger if the King recovered. That no such recovery was likely to take place was still the prevailing belief among the Opposition, and Fox was convinced that he would be in office in about a fortnight,[1] but on the ministerial side the chances were now very differently calculated. Dr. Willis was there trusted more than Dr. Warren, and his reports were becoming daily more encouraging. Thurlow determined, therefore, by one great display to clear his position. In a speech on December 15 he not only expressed his strong adhesion to the doctrine of the Government, but astonished his hearers by bursting into a flood of tears as he described the afflicted condition of the King, his own unalterable resolution to support him, and his boundless gratitude for the favours he had received. 'When I forget my King,' he exclaimed, 'may my God forget me!'

The words made a great but various impression. To the outside world they seemed a touching and eloquent expression of devoted loyalty, but they were regarded very differently by those politicians who knew something of the recent proceedings of the Chancellor. 'Forget you!' exclaimed Wilkes, who was standing on the steps of the throne, 'he will see you d—d first!' 'Forget you!' said Burke, who was also among the listeners; 'the best thing that could happen to you!'

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[1] On December 15 Fox wrote: 'We shall have several hard fights in the House of Commons this week and next, in some of which I fear we shall be beat; but whether we are or not, I think it is certain that in about a fortnight we shall come in. If we carry our questions we shall come in in a more creditable and triumphant way, but at any rate the Prince must be Regent, and of consequence the ministry must be changed. . . . The King himself (notwithstanding the reports which you may possibly hear) is certainly worse and perfectly mad. I believe the chance of his recovery is very small indeed, but I do not think there is any probability of his dying.'—Fox's *Correspondence*, ii. 299, 300.

Pitt, who was standing a few paces from Thurlow when the ejaculation was made, turning to General Manners exclaimed in a loud voice, 'Oh, the rascal!'[1] The speech, however, at least showed the opinion of a very acute judge on the probable issue of the conflict, and in a subsequent debate Thurlow again distinguished himself by the effusive loyalty and pathos with which he supported the Crown. He gained the full confidence of the Queen, yet he never wholly lost the favour of the Prince, who keenly appreciated his convivial qualities. Complete rupture between the Chancellor and the Opposition, however, could not long be delayed, and it was a source of real gratification to Fox and to his colleagues, some of whom appeared to have entertained a notion, which was, I think, certainly untrue, that Thurlow was betraying their counsels to Pitt.[2] It is

[1] Wraxall states that this was told him by General Manners himself, and acknowledged to him by Pitt.—*Posthumous Memoirs*, iii. 220, 221.

[2] Sir G. Elliot writes to his wife, December 27: 'The day before yesterday there was a final explanation with the Chancellor, which terminated in a decided separation between him and our party, to the great joy of Fox and of every one of us except the Prince himself. The Chancellor has been the whole of this time playing a shabby trimming game, keeping himself open to both parties, till one should be completely victorious. The Prince, who has always had a partiality for the Chancellor, probably on account of his *table* qualities, has been negotiating and intriguing and canvassing him incessantly, with very little discretion or prudence, all the time; and in spite of many disappointments and breaches of engagements which the Chancellor had made about the part he should take in the House of Lords, he still persisted in sending for him and holding long conversations with him on the business. The Chancellor by this means learned the interior of the Prince's affairs and intentions, and was betraying him all the time to Pitt. Fox, at last, who has uniformly been against any connection with the Chancellor, of whom he thinks worse than of any man in the world, had an explicit conference with him, in which he drove the Chancellor to final and full declarations of his intentions; and he is now quite off. The reason of our satisfaction on this event, notwithstanding the strength of the

remarkable that even after the King's recovery there continued to be a friendly feeling and connection between Thurlow and the Prince of Wales, and it was regarded by the Whigs with great bitterness and with some fear. 'The Chancellor,' wrote Sir G. Elliot as late as February 23, 'is again getting about the Prince of Wales, persuading him that he is attached to him and that he hates Pitt, which latter part is perfectly true; but he is the falsest and most treacherous character in the world, and much more likely to mislead the Prince than to serve him, or to do anything else that is consistent or honourable.'[1]

The main contention of the Opposition speakers was the extreme inexpediency of pronouncing a formal parliamentary judgment on the question of right, and they, therefore, met the second resolution, which asserted the right of Parliament, by the previous question, which was moved in a very able speech by Lord North. In addition to the popular feeling that ran strongly against him, Fox had to contend against the unfortunate fact that he was urging Parliament to abstain from passing a judgment on a question which he had himself introduced. His followers were obliged to argue that the right of the Prince of Wales had been very unnecessarily forced into debate, and that it was giving a most undue and unprecedented importance to a statement thrown out by an unofficial member in the course of his argument, to make it the basis of a parliamentary resolution. The Government, however, carried their second resolution by a large majority, the previous question being rejected by 268 to 204. The victory was a decisive one, for the best judges among the Opposition had antici-

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Chancellor's interest in the House of Lords, is that he is considered as a treacherous and dangerous character to form any connection with and to admit into a Cabinet.'—Lady Minto's *Life of Sir G. Elliot*, i. 249, 250.

[1] Ibid. pp. 275, 276.

pated that ministers, if not defeated, would at least win by only a very small majority, and that the course which the Opposition had adopted of deprecating a vote upon a right which had not been claimed, would draw to them all those neutral and moderate men who were chiefly anxious for public tranquillity.[1] The third resolution was then introduced, asserting that it was necessary for the two Houses to 'determine on the means whereby the royal assent may be given in Parliament to such a Bill as may be passed by the two Houses of Parliament respecting the exercise of the powers and authorities of the Crown, in the name and on the behalf of the King, during the continuance of his Majesty's present indisposition.' It passed through the House of Commons in a single sitting on December 22 by 251 to 178. Next day the three resolutions were sent up to the House of Lords, where they were finally agreed to on the 29th. There appears to have been only one division on the resolutions in the Upper House, and the numbers were 99 to 66; but some powerful speeches were made against them, and a protest embodying the chief arguments of the Opposition was signed by the Dukes of York and Gloucester and by forty-five other peers. With the exception of a protest against the impeachment of Sacheverell in 1709, it was the most numerously signed in the journals of the House.

At this stage of the proceedings, legislation was for a short time interrupted by the sudden illness of Cornwall, the Speaker, and by his death on January 2. He had occupied the Chair since 1780, and it is a curious coincidence that Lord Grantley, who, as Sir

[1] Lady Minto's *Life of Sir G. Elliot*, i. 246, 247. On the eve of this division Sir John Eden wrote to his brother: 'The bets at Brooks's this night are even against the minister, though the Chancellor has declared for him.' — *Auckland Correspondence*, ii. 259.

Fletcher Norton, had preceded him, died only twenty-four hours before him. On the 5th, William Grenville, who was Joint Paymaster of the Forces, was elected Speaker by 215 votes, while Sir Gilbert Elliot, the candidate of the Opposition, received only 144.

The Government having now obtained in the form of resolutions the sanction of Parliament for their policy, their path was comparatively smooth, though some serious fluctuations in the state of the King, the undisguised hostility of the Prince of Wales and of the royal dukes, and the manifest intention to change the Government when the regency was established, detached a few waverers and shook the confidence of many. With a weak minister the parliamentary majority might have crumbled away, but the discipline and tone of the House of Commons, like that of an army, depends mainly on the character of its leader, and Pitt on this occasion led the House with as admirable a skill as in the great struggle of 1784. It was in these periods that his real greatness was most fully seen, and there can be no better study in the art of parliamentary management than is furnished by his conduct. The frankness with which he dealt with the House; the courage, presence of mind, good sense, and moderation with which he met every question as it arose; the skill with which he brought into relief every popular point on his own side and every unpopular point on the side of his opponents, could hardly be surpassed. Always firm but never obstinate, always conciliatory but never weak, he steadily maintained the semblance of disinterestedness and patriotism and that ascendency of character which was the true cause of his superiority over his opponents. In soundness of constitutional doctrine, in power of reasoning and power of language, the speeches of Fox and one or two of the speeches of North appear to me to be at least equal to those of Pitt, but Pitt possessed,

and Fox wanted, the confidence of the House and of the nation, and Pitt scarcely ever made a mistake in management, while Fox and the most illustrious of his supporters were frequently guilty of the gravest imprudences. 'There certainly never was in this country, at any period, such a situation as Mr. Pitt's,' wrote Grenville to his brother on one of the last days of 1788. 'It is no small addition to the satisfaction which we derive from all these events, to observe that every man of all parties seems to feel how well the game has been played on our side and how ridiculously it has been mismanaged by our opponents.'[1] 'The popular opinion,' he wrote in another letter, 'shows itself every day more and more. . . . Fox's declaration of the Prince of Wales's right has been of no small service to us. Is it not wonderful that such great talents should be conducted with so little judgment?'[2]

Nothing could be more admirable than the dignity and measure with which Pitt met the most violent attacks of his opponents. On one occasion Burke, commenting upon the declaration that it was treason to the Constitution to assert the Prince of Wales's inherent right to the regency, asked 'where was the freedom of debate, where was the privilege of Parliament, if the rights of the Prince of Wales could not be spoken of in the House, without their being liable to be charged with treason by one of the Prince's competitors?' 'When he said the Prince of Wales had no more right to urge such a claim than any other individual subject,' answered Pitt, 'he appealed to the House upon the decency with which the right honourable gentleman had charged him with placing himself as a competitor to his Royal Highness. At the period when the Constitution was settled on its present foundation, when

[1] *Courts and Cabinets*, ii. 81. [2] Ibid. p. 64.

Mr. Somers and other great men declared that no person had a right to the crown independent of the consent of the two Houses, would it have been thought either fair or decent for any member of either House to have pronounced Mr. Somers a personal competitor of William III.?' On another occasion Fox dilated with great bitterness on the conduct of Pitt in forcing to a formal parliamentary decision the right of the Prince of Wales to the regency, although that right was never claimed and although he himself admitted that it was practically impossible to choose any other Regent. Such conduct, Fox said, could only be due to an ignoble desire to win a party triumph, 'and to insult a Prince whose favour he was conscious he had not deserved.' Pitt at once answered that 'he only knew one way in which he or any other man could *deserve* the confidence of the Prince—by doing his duty to the King his father and to the country at large, and if, in having thus endeavoured to deserve the confidence of the Prince, it should in fact appear that he had lost it, however mortifying and painful that circumstance might be to him, though he might regret it, he would boldly say that it was impossible he should repent it.'

This tone of dignity was not sustained on the opposite side, and the speeches of Burke were especially characterised by the defects from which those of Pitt were most free. I have written much in a former volume on the character and intellect of Burke, but it is impossible to dismiss the debates on the regency without noticing what a painful and humiliating spectacle his speeches on this question present as they appear in the parliamentary history. They contain, it is true, some examples of admirable reasoning, illustration, or expression, and it is, I think, evident that the speeches of the leaders were reported with more care and fulness than the speeches even of the most eminent of their

followers, and also that the eloquence of Burke was of a kind peculiarly unsuited to reporters. The great rapidity of his delivery, the marked individuality of his diction, the length and the discursiveness of his speaking were all obstacles, and the meagre reports we possess are sometimes accompanied by remarks of reporters which intimate how much we have lost. 'He went over the whole ground of objection to the Bill with wonderful fluency and ability, and in the course of his speech expressed many noble sentiments in most elegant and pointed language.' 'Mr. Burke enlarged upon this topic considerably and with his customary ardour of expression.' 'Mr. Burke urged this argument very strenuously and with great force of expression.' Sir Gilbert Elliot noticed the wonderful beauty and power of one of these speeches and the great admiration it elicited.[1] But it is unfortunately but too true that the speeches of Burke, on this as on many other occasions, if full of genius, were also full of the most extraordinary exhibitions of passion, indiscretion, exaggeration and ill taste.

In truth this great and good man, whose judgment in the retirement of his cabinet was so wise, so far-seeing and often so nobly impartial, was subject in the excitement of debate to paroxysms of passion which indicated a mind profoundly and radically diseased. He could instruct, dazzle and sometimes convince, but he had not the smallest power of winning and conciliating, and his luxuriantly prolific but strangely unchastened imagination often hurried him into images that were both revolting and grotesque. It was thus

[1] Lady Minto's *Life of Sir G. Elliot*, i. 269. An excellent account of Burke's speeches on the regency and of their effects will be found in the *Posthumous Memoirs* of Wraxall, who was present, and who, though often inaccurate in details, was an admirable observer and describer of men and things.

that he compared the fictitious King entrusted with the Great Seal to a Priapus set up by the Government for adoration; that he turned the expression 'heaven-born minister,' which a foolish follower had applied to Pitt, into a claim for the minister, of divine right, one of 'the idiot abominations of the Stuart race;' that he accused Pitt, who had described the incapacitated King as still undoubtedly on the throne, of 'making a mockery of the King, putting a crown of thorns on his head, and a reed in his hand, and dressing him in purple to cry, Hail, King of the British!' The partition of the royal power in the regency scheme he described as 'cutting and carving the Government as you would cut out morsels for hounds.' He again and again charged Pitt with a design to degrade the royal family in order to serve the purposes of ambitious men. Alluding to the exclusion of the royal princes from the care of the royal person, he exclaimed, in a strain of the wildest exaggeration, 'The Bill meant not only to degrade the Prince of Wales but the whole House of Brunswick, who were to be outlawed, excommunicated, and attainted, as having forfeited all claim to the confidence of the country.' 'Some gentlemen,' the reporter adds, 'smiling at the extent of this doctrine and the vehemence of emphasis with which it was delivered, Mr. Burke burst out into a degree of warmth that was scarcely ever before witnessed, reprobated the conduct of the other side of the House, charging them with degrading the royal family, sowing the seeds of future distractions and disunion in that family, and with proceeding to act treasons for which the justice of their country would one day overtake them and bring them to trial.'

In a speech in which he deprecated the proposal of the minister to withhold from the Regent the power of making peers, he had the strange indiscretion to

enumerate, amid the laughter of the House, a list of members of great Whig families on whom a peerage might be properly conferred. On other occasions he spoke of the King in language which shocked all the best feelings of his hearers. He denounced Dr. Willis, who took the most sanguine view of the King's recovery, and eulogised Dr. Warren, who took the opposite view, in a strain that gave but too much colour to the remark of Pitt, that Burke had 'displayed a degree of warmth that seemed to have arisen from his entertaining wishes different from those of the rest of the House.' He described the King as 'a monarch smitten by the hand of Omnipotence,' declared that 'the Almighty had hurled him from his throne and plunged him into a condition that drew upon him the pity of the meanest peasant in the kingdom,' and having with characteristic industry made a careful study of the literature of lunacy, he horrified and revolted the House by predicting the probable relapse that would follow a temporary recovery. 'The disorder with which the Sovereign was afflicted,' he said, 'was like a vast sea which rolled in, and at low tide rolled back and left a bold and barren shore,' and he proceeded to dilate upon the uncertainty of the symptoms of sanity, and to read extracts from a medical work showing how 'some unfortunate individuals after a supposed recovery had committed parricide, others had butchered their sons, others had done violence to themselves by hanging, shooting, drowning themselves, throwing themselves out of the window and by a variety of other ways,' till the indignant House would hear no more, and the voice of the orator was lost in the angry tumult.

The effect of such language was what might have been expected. Burke, even in some of his greatest speeches, was constantly interrupted by cries of 'Order' and derisive laughter, and often, when he rose to speak,

a number of members left the House. Pitt in one of his replies was able to say that 'he seldom thought it worth his while to interrupt the right honourable gentleman and call him to order, or indeed to make him any answer, because his speeches, from their extraordinary style and the peculiarly violent tone of warmth and passion with which they were generally delivered, seldom failed to give that impression which those against whom they were directed wished them to give.' Sir Richard Hill, in a brutal speech, plainly hinted that Burke was himself insane and that he would probably soon be an inmate of a lunatic asylum.[1] 'Edmund Burke arose a little after four,' wrote Sir W. Young to Lord Buckingham, 'and is speaking yet. He has been wilder than ever, and laid himself and party open more than ever speaker did. He is Folly personified, but shaking his cap and bells under the laurel of genius. . . . He finished his wild speech in a manner next to madness.'[2]

It is necessary to bear these things in mind if we would form a just estimate of Burke, and they do much to explain and palliate the small amount of official rank which he obtained.[3] I know few contrasts more extra-

[1] *Parl. Hist.* xxvii. 1249.

[2] Buckingham's *Courts and Cabinets*, ii. 71, 73. So, too, Addington wrote of one of the debates on the regency: 'Burke followed him [Pitt] and discredited himself. Indeed, he was violent almost to madness.'—Pellew's *Life of Sidmouth*, i. 60.

[3] 'Burke was undoubtedly the oracle of the Marquis of Rockingham and of all the pure Rockingham party, but the House of Commons never did, nor ever could, have submitted to him as a leader of any party, and this his best friends knew. Why, it may be asked, being gifted with acquirements beyond all other men, perhaps, living or dead, and surpassing all his contemporaries in the highest flights of eloquence, was he not the leader of his party? First, because he wanted taste, and secondly because he was the most impracticable of men. He never knew when not to speak; he never knew when to speak short; he never consulted the feelings and prejudices of his audience. I remember hearing Lord Thurlow

ordinary than that which is presented by his speeches on the regency, and the wonderful speech which in the very same year he delivered before the House of Lords in opening the impeachment of Warren Hastings—a speech which in some of the highest qualities of eloquence has never been surpassed, and which it is probable that no other man who ever appeared in English political life could have delivered.

Burke was not one of the friends of the Prince of Wales. His severely moral, decorous and laborious life was little suited for the atmosphere that surrounded the Prince, and he was able to say that he knew as little of Carlton as of Buckingham House, and that if he obtained any place by a change of ministry it was likely to be only a very subordinate one.[1] His health was at this time much shaken: his circumstances were much embarrassed, and he was conscious that political anxieties acted too powerfully on his mind.[2] On the regency

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say of him and Fox, that the difference between them during the American controversy was that Fox always spoke to the House, and Burke spoke as if he was speaking to himself.'—Lord Liverpool to Croker, *Croker Papers*, i. 289, 290.

[1] It appears, however, from a letter of Sir G. Elliot, that Portland (who had a profound admiration for Burke) had determined to bestow on him the pay office with a pension of 2,000*l.* a year on the Irish Establishment, which was to revert after his death to his wife and son. This arrangement was made entirely without the knowledge of Burke.—*Life of Sir G. Elliot*, i. 261–263.

[2] In a long and striking letter to Windham (Jan. 24, 1789) he says: 'I began to find that I was grown rather too anxious, and had begun to discover to myself and to others a solicitude relative to the present state of affairs, which, though their strange condition might well warrant it in others, is certainly less suitable to my time of life, in which all emotions are less allowed, and to which most certainly all human concerns ought in reason to become more indifferent, than to those who have work to do and a good deal of day and of inexhausted strength to do it in. I sincerely wish to withdraw myself from this scene for good and all; but unluckily the India business binds me in point of honour.'—Burke's *Correspondence*, iii. 89.

question he was little consulted, and he was not satisfied with the manner in which it was conducted. His opinion on the question seems to have been substantially the same as that of the Duke of Gloucester, the brother of the King. He maintained that as soon as the King was incapacitated, it was for the Prince of Wales, and not for the ministers, to take the lead ; that 'he should have done what it has been said was his right to do,' and that this 'might have been as safely done as it was unsafely said.' He ought to have at once gone down to the House of Lords, to have communicated the King's condition to that House in person and to the House of Commons by message, to have desired the advice and assistance of the two Houses, and to have himself originated the proceedings in Council. In this way, Burke contended, the Prince would have placed himself with advantage before the eyes of the people, would have taught them to look upon him with respect as a person possessed of the spirit of command, and would have given his friends the strong position of his proposers instead of the inferior position of a mere common opposition. This counsel, however, was rejected by Fox and by the other leaders of the Opposition, and Burke appears then to have expected very little from the campaign.[1] He spoke, however, often, and probably not to the advantage of his cause.

It would have been difficult, indeed, with the utmost discretion and skill, to have advocated at this time the claims of the Prince of Wales without revolting the popular feelings, which were raised to the highest point of pity for the King and of admiration for his minister, and it was a peculiar infelicity of the Opposition that,

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[1] Burke's *Correspondence*, iii. 81–85, 88–101. See, too, Prior's *Life of Burke* (2nd ed.), ii. 6–24. On the Duke of Gloucester's opinion, see Fox's *Correspondence*, ii. 319.

as the propriety of imposing restrictions on the Regent depended mainly on the probability of the speedy recovery of the King, they were almost forced by their party position to attenuate that probability, and to make themselves especial supporters of those physicians who questioned it. On January 6, when Pitt had intended to introduce the limitations, the Opposition interposed, and, observing that a month had elapsed since the last examination of the physicians, and that there was great doubt and difference about their opinions, they urged that a new examination should take place, and that the prospects of recovery should be more clearly ascertained before any further steps were taken. Pitt at first resisted, but finally acquiesced in an inquiry, which occupied five days, and produced a report of nearly four hundred pages. It appeared from it that the King's state and chance of recovery were substantially unchanged; that all the doctors admitted the possibility of recovery, but that there was a difference of opinion about the probability. Sir George Baker and Dr. Warren were the least confident, while Dr. Willis, who was specially conversant with insanity, considered the recovery almost certain, and predicted that it would probably take place at some date between three months and a year and a half after the first attack.

The restrictions on the regency were first introduced in the form of resolutions, which were afterwards to be embodied in a bill. Among the ancient precedents which had been adduced, there had been instances of a council being appointed with the Regent, to control his acts and his choice of servants, and there were some rumours that Pitt might endeavour in such a way to secure his position. Those who supposed so, however, knew him but little. To maintain, as far as was possible under the circumstances, the attitude of disinterested patriotism was his first object, and he ac-

cordingly made it one of the leading features of his scheme that the Regent should have a full and uncontrolled power of dismissing the ministers, choosing his own servants, and dissolving Parliament. He also stated in the plainest and most emphatic terms that he introduced his scheme of limitations only through a belief that the interruption of the King's personal exercise of authority was likely to be temporary and short. In the opinion of Dr. Willis, the malady with which the King was afflicted very rarely continued as long as two years, and its average duration was five or six months. If the hopes of the nation were unhappily disappointed, if the illness of the King seemed likely to be permanent or of great duration, it would be for Parliament to reconsider the restrictions. Assuming, however, that the King was likely in a short time to resume his authority, it was the duty of the ministers to provide that while the Regent obtained full powers for carrying on the government, nothing which was not required for this purpose should be granted; nothing which could restrict the power, impair the dignity, or hurt the feelings of the Sovereign when he recovered.

The first proposed restriction was that the Regent should have no power of bestowing peerages, except on members of the royal family who had attained the age of twenty-one years. This portion of his subject Pitt introduced with a short constitutional dissertation, of a kind which is very seldom found in his speeches. The power of making peers, he said, was lodged with the Sovereign for three purposes. The first was to reward distinguished merit. 'The second was that, as property and the influence which accompanied it were fluctuating, and as the dignity of the peerage would be lost if that power was supposed to exist elsewhere, it was necessary that it should be infused into the peerage gradually as it arose.' The third was 'that it placed a strong check

in the hands of the Crown, and this was one of the checks against oligarchy, as others had been devised by the Constitution against a pure monarchy and an imperious democracy.' From the first two points of view, a brief suspension of the right of making peers was of little consequence, and although it might be argued that the predominant opinion in the House of Lords might, if no longer liable to be counteracted by new creations, impede the Executive Government of the Regent, yet Parliament was bound to judge the question according to the balance of advantages and disadvantages. It would be a still greater evil if the Sovereign should find upon his recovery that a large number of peers had been created, to whose opinions and characters he strongly objected, and that one branch of the Legislature had thus been permanently and materially modified in a manner that was contrary to his wishes. It was not likely, Pitt said, that the existing peers would risk their reputation 'to bring in any set of ministers.' 'If they should obstruct the executive authority in the beginning, they certainly would not after an interval of experiment, and when the King's recovery might become less probable. At all events the remedy was in the hands of Parliament, and a House of Commons could at any time resolve that the cause of the restriction had lost its force, and the measure its necessity.'

The second restriction greatly limited the patronage of the Regent, providing that he should have no power to grant any reversion, or any office or pension, for any other term than during his Majesty's pleasure, except in a few unavoidable cases, like that of the judges, when the law required the office to be filled up, and to be granted for life or during good behaviour. The Regent was thus deprived of almost all power of permanently rewarding his supporters, and the whole

patronage he had exercised would be annulled by the recovery of the King.

The third restriction provided that he might not grant any part of the King's real or personal estates, except as far as relates to the renewal of leases.

The fourth and last related to the King's person. It provided that the care of the King's person should be entrusted to the Queen, and that the whole of the King's household should be maintained and should be put under her sole authority, with full power to dismiss and to appoint. It was admitted that many of the Court officials could have no duties during the King's incapacity, but it was a matter of dignity to maintain them, and it would be manifestly most distressing to the Sovereign if he should hereafter find that, during an illness of a few months, his household had been remodelled, and many of his faithful personal attendants dismissed. A Council was to be appointed to assist the Queen by their advice, but without any power of control, and it was to have the right of examining upon oath the physicians and other persons attending the King, 'touching the state of his Majesty's health, and all matters relating thereto.' Pitt at the same time announced his intention of introducing at a future time propositions for providing the Regent with a retinue suitable to his new position, but the Prince, a few days after, intimated by the mouth of Fox that it would be highly irksome to him to add anything for such a purpose to the burdens of the country.

The scheme of restrictions thus defined was, in the course of its long passage through Parliament, fully and vehemently debated, and although during a portion of the discussions Fox was incapacitated by serious illness, his place was well filled by Sheridan, who was in the special confidence of the Prince, and by North, whose speeches appear to me singularly able and temperate.

To some portions of the scheme there was little or no objection. It was generally admitted that the care of the King's person was properly confided to the Queen, though it was contended that this did not at all necessarily imply that she should have an absolute power over the household. The clause withholding from the Regent all power of disposing of the property of the King was objected to so far as it related to the real property, which was held in trust for the nation, and the Privy Purse, which came directly from taxation, but the personal property of the King rested on a different basis. It was as completely his own to give or to bequeath as the property of any private gentleman. If his son appropriated it during the lifetime of his father, he would be guilty of a criminal fraud, and the only objection, therefore, to this part of the Bill was that to make a special enactment on the subject was both unnecessary and grossly insulting to the Prince. Loughborough, in commenting upon it, reminded the House of Lords that it had been pronounced a libel for one person to send to another a paper with the words from Holy Writ, 'Thou shalt not steal.'

The appointment of a council to assist the Queen also excited no criticism until its nature and functions were more fully disclosed. It appeared that the Government intended it to consist of the chief officers of the household, the two archbishops, Lord Thurlow, and one or two other high officials, but no member of the royal family was to sit in it. As the King had three sons in addition to the Prince of Wales, and also two brothers, it was pronounced monstrous that no member of his family should be admitted to a council which was to assist the Queen in the care of the royal person. We have already seen the violence with which Burke dilated upon this exclusion; but Pitt successfully resisted the attempts of the

Opposition to introduce the royal family into the council. The Queen, it was said, could at any time consult the members of her family. The Prince of Wales, as the heir to the throne, was by common consent excluded from the care of the King's person, and it was therefore more becoming that his younger brothers should not be admitted. It was also more respectful to the royal family not to place them in a responsible position, which made them liable to be called to the bar of the House to answer for their conduct. 'It was a respect,' Burke sarcastically observed, 'which was a perpetual disqualification—much like the respect of the Epicureans for their gods.'

Among the functions bestowed upon the new council was that of pronouncing on the recovery of the King. The Queen and any five members of the council might notify to the President of the council and to one of the Secretaries of State that the King was again capable of exercising the royal authority. The communication was to be immediately sent to the Regent; to the Lord Mayor of London, who was to publish it in the 'London Gazette;' and to the Privy Council, and the King might then summon a council of not less than nine members named by himself, and might resume the government by a proclamation bearing his own signature and that of six Privy Councillors. The Opposition contended that by this machinery it was very possible that the King might be brought back into authority when his recovery was far from complete, and they vainly urged that as a parliamentary vote had established the fact of his incapacity, it was for Parliament also to ascertain and to authenticate the fact of his recovery. The members were significantly reminded of the calamities that fell upon France in the reign of Charles VI., when the Sovereign was habitually insane but with occasional lucid intervals, and when the Queen and a faction who

were about her employed his name and his authority as they pleased.

These, however, were minor objections to the scheme, and the great weight of the argument turned upon the restriction or partition of the royal prerogatives. This, it was maintained, is essentially unconstitutional, and, although it was advocated in the interest of the King, it tended directly to lower the royal authority. The Constitution, it was said, has circumscribed the royal prerogative by many laws written and unwritten, and has thus provided a sufficient control, but this is the only description of control which it recognises. The portion of power which is confided to the Sovereign is a trust for the people; it is essential to the balance of the Constitution and to the strength of the Executive, and it ought therefore to be maintained intact and undivided. Was it for the interests of the monarchy 'to appoint a person to the royal office, and to separate from that office the royal authority;' to endeavour in the person of the Regent 'to ascertain with how small a portion of kingly power the Executive Government of this country may be carried on;' to 'exhibit the sovereign power of the nation in a state of degradation, of curtailed authority, and diminished energy?' Under any circumstances, the Government of a regent is unavoidably weaker than that of a king, and yet the whole scheme of the regency was constructed with the object of tying the hands of the ministers of the Regent at a time when they would be most in need of authority, and of producing artificially and deliberately a state of administrative debility and instability. The Regency Bill, in all its parts, stamped a suspicion on the character of the Prince of Wales, and was evidently founded on the supposition that he was not a person to be trus ed. It was no less evident, it was said, that the conduct of Pitt was governed by party considerations and by per-

sonal ambition. Could anyone suppose that if it had been thought probable that the present ministers would have been kept in office a Bill would have been introduced to involve them in such a maze of restrictions? It was idle for Pitt to profess himself ready to concede to the Regent the full power of choosing his servants, if he was at the same time so regulating the regency as to throw insuperable difficulties in the path of any ministry but his own. This, it was said, was his manifest policy. He had seen that it was impossible to pass over the claims of the Prince of Wales to the regency. He had not succeeded in inducing the Prince to decline an office which was surrounded with so many invidious restrictions, but he could at least take measures which would make his own political ascendency almost certain. He had himself created more than forty peers. He had a steady majority in the Upper House, and he withheld from his successors the only possible means of overthrowing it. The ministers of the Regent would be at the same time deprived of by far the largest and most valuable portion of that patronage which all preceding governments had possessed and had deemed absolutely essential to the conduct of affairs. The Regent was given all the responsibility of royalty and all its invidious duties, but scarcely any power of commanding or rewarding service.

But this was not all. The place assigned to the Queen tended directly to divide the royal family, to set mother against son, and to make the ministry of the Regent dependent on the wishes of the Queen. The whole vast patronage of the household was in her hands. It consisted of more than 200,000*l.* a year. No less than eighteen peers of Parliament belonged to the household, and it was chiefly by votes of this description that the early ministries of the reign had been overthrown. The Court was separated from the execu-

tive power. An independent, a rival, and a superior centre of influence was set up, against which it would be hopeless for an enfeebled and restricted ministry to contend. It was tolerably certain from the known sentiments of the Queen that her influence would be exerted against the Whigs, and it was most probable that the whole patronage of the household and the political influence connected with it would still, in the event of a change of ministry, continue to be directed by Pitt. A caricature of the time well illustrated the situation when it represented Pitt, Thurlow and Dundas as three weird sisters standing on a heath gazing anxiously on the half-eclipsed orb of the moon. The darkened side represented the King's countenance, but on the other side was the Queen's face still bathed in light and graciously regarding the three gazers. So strongly did Fox feel the hopelessness of the position, that he positively declared that he would not accept the administration of affairs unless it were accompanied by all the patronage and all the emoluments which are annexed to it by the Constitution, for he did not believe that the government of the country could on any other conditions be conducted with efficiency and dignity.

It is true that Pitt represented the restrictions as intended only for a short period, and had said that they ought certainly to terminate if the King's illness appeared unhappily likely to be permanent. But the period of their abolition was completely uncertain, and Pitt at first refused to introduce any limitation into the Bill. What was there, it was asked, to prevent such a form of government from continuing for ten, fifteen, or twenty years? And was it not possible that the difficulties of abolishing it might be much greater than was supposed? The power of adding to the Upper House corresponds to the power of dissolving the Lower House, and it is the only efficient constitutional check

that exists upon the House of Lords. This check the Regency Bill would abolish, and unless the King recovered or died, it could not be restored without the assent of the Upper House. Was it so sure that this assent would be given? The majority of the Upper House would have the strongest party motives for refusal, and the importance of the existing peers of all parties would be greatly increased if it was impossible to add to their numbers. It was not forgotten how readily the peers had welcomed the Peerage Bill under George I. which by stopping new creations was likely to magnify their social dignity and their constitutional power. If the Regency Bill passed in the form in which it was introduced, combinations would certainly take place in the Upper House, against which it would be totally impossible for the Government of the Regent to contend.

These objections appear to me in a great part sound and serious, but they were arguments of unpopular men in an unpopular cause. They were put forward with much force in the debates in Parliament, in protests in the House of Lords, but especially in the admirable reply of the Prince of Wales to Pitt's letter announcing to him the intended scheme of the Regency. The composition of this reply was very wisely entrusted to Burke,[1] and it would be impossible to state the chief objections to the Regency Bill with a greater cogency of argument, or a greater force, beauty, and dignity of language. The Prince consented, however, to accept the Government on the terms that were proposed, on the understanding that the limitations were for no long period, and Pitt consented before the Bill finally passed

[1] The letter, Sir G. Elliot states, 'was originally Burke's, altered a little, but not improved, by Sheridan and other critics.'—*Life of Sir G. Elliot*, i. 268.

the Commons to introduce an important alteration, limiting the restriction on the creation of peers to three years. In agreeing to this alteration he stated that he had no idea that any of the restrictions should continue so long. There was every reason to hope for the King's speedy recovery, but if unfortunately this hope were disappointed, he thought that all the restrictions on the Regent should be abolished at an earlier period. It was impossible to assign a precise limit, but he would agree to three years, as a period the most extreme and distant that could be contemplated.

The double process of carrying the measure through the two Houses, first in the form of resolutions and then in the form of a bill, caused a considerable delay, and there were several cumbrous forms to be gone through. It was deemed necessary to give the King's formal sanction to the opening of Parliament, and a commission was accordingly appointed under the Great Seal to open it in the name of his Majesty. The sentiments with which the royal family regarded the proceedings of the ministers were evinced by the request of the Prince of Wales and of the Dukes of York, Cumberland, and Gloucester, that their names might all be omitted from the commission. Among the subjects that were discussed during the debates on the Bill, was the very embarrassing one of the reported marriage of the Prince with Mrs. Fitzherbert. Rolle declared that he only 'gave his consent to appointing the Prince of Wales Regent upon the ground that he was not married to Mrs. Fitzherbert either in law or in equity,' and when a clause in the Regency Bill was introduced, annulling the powers of the Regent if he either ceased to live in England or married a Catholic, Rolle moved an amendment excluding from the regency 'any person proved to be married either in law or in fact to a Papist or one of Roman Catholic persuasion.'

The amendment was not pressed to a division, but it produced an animated and somewhat remarkable debate. Fox was absent through real and serious illness. Pitt declared the amendment to be wholly unnecessary, but he dilated in terms of marked eulogy on the character and motives of Rolle and made a violent attack on Lord North, who had ridiculed the pertinacity with which Rolle dwelt on 'dangers to Church and State' which could not possibly exist, as by the Royal Marriage Act there could be no marriage of the Prince of Wales without the consent of the King. Welbore Ellis caused the Royal Marriage Act to be read, asserting that this was a simple and sufficient answer to the rumours that had been spread. Dundas declared that the positive and explicit denial of the rumour which Fox had been authorised to make two sessions before had decided his opinion. He greatly regretted the absence of Fox on the present occasion, but he added that he had so high an opinion of his sincerity that he was confident that he would have come down to the House, even at the risk of his life, if anything had occurred to alter the opinion he had formerly expressed. But the most remarkable speeches appear to have been those of Grey, and it can only be said of them that it is to be hoped that his language was in fact somewhat less unqualified and emphatic than it appears in the meagre report of the parliamentary history. According to the reporter, he, in two distinct speeches, denounced the rumour which had been circulated about the Prince of Wales, and which had given rise to the amendment before the House, as 'false, libellous, and calumnious.' 'He admitted the justice of Mr. Dundas's remark relative to Mr. Fox, and assured the committee that it was due to the character of his right honourable friend to declare that no consideration of health or any other circumstance would have prevented his attendance in his

place, if he had not at that moment been fully satisfied that what he had asserted on a former occasion was strictly true. Had the case been otherwise, his right honourable friend would have been present, even at the risk of his life.'[1]

It was not till February 13 that the Bill had finally passed the House of Commons, and by this time a marked improvement had taken place in the condition of the King. After many fluctuations, the disease took a decisive turn about the end of the first week in February, but still it was for some time the prevailing belief that the regency would be established and the ministry changed. In the beginning of February medals to commemorate the regency were already struck and sold in the streets. Whig ladies appeared in society with caps that were known as 'regency caps' and with ribbons indicating their politics. Pitt, who possessed no private fortune, thought seriously of resuming his practice at the bar, and it was well known that an Administration presided over by the Duke of Portland had been already settled in almost all its details.[2] From the very beginning of the King's illness it was believed in political circles that his chance of recovery was much smaller than was represented to the public,[3] and the accounts of his improved condition were scanned with great suspicion. The animosity that divided the two parties was singularly strong,[4] and the worst in-

[1] *Parl. Hist.* xxvii. 1191–1193.

[2] Buckingham's *Courts and Cabinets*, ii. 11–33; Lady Minto's *Life of Sir G. Elliot*, i. 260–263.

[3] *Auckland Correspondence*, ii. 240–242, 245, 256.

[4] Thus Sir G. Elliot writes: 'The prevailing principle not only with ministers but with all the party, and quite to a degree of passion and fury, is to consider the Prince of Wales, and everything that is suspected of the least attachment to him, as a prey to be hunted down and destroyed without mercy. This I assure you is the private conversation of the ministers and the Queen's whole set.'—*Life of Sir G. Elliot*, i. 272, 273.

ferences were drawn by the Whigs from the manner in which the King's sons were excluded from the presence of their father, and from the fact that when they were at last admitted, they were never allowed to be with him alone. It was acknowledged that there was a great improvement, and that on indifferent subjects he could talk rationally, but it was said that this was merely one of those lucid intervals which are so common in the illness, that he spoke rationally only in the presence and under the restraint of a physician, that he showed a constant tendency on particular subjects to relapse into folly, and that the smallest excitement would be sufficient to overturn the balance of his mind. On February 10 Sir George Baker, after visiting Kew, said that the King's state was encouraging, but that it was too soon to speak of convalescence or to assert anything about a final cure. Dr. Warren, whose judgment had greatly influenced the Whig party, had from the beginning openly expressed his opinion that the King was not likely to recover. He was now, it is true, somewhat shaken, but he still believed a perfect recovery to be improbable, and about February 10 he assured the Duke of Portland that it would be wrong not to accept office, for it was impossible that the King could resume the direction of affairs in less than a year.[1] On the 12th the Archbishop of Canterbury wrote to Eden that it was still the almost universal opinion that there would be a change of ministry the moment the regency was established.[2] As late as the 17th, Fox, who was still ill at Bath, wrote to Fitzpatrick assuming that the regency was certain, and asking to be informed by return of post on what day it was likely to begin. 'I hope,' he

[1] *Life of Sir G. Elliot*, i. 271, 273, 274; *Cornwallis Correspondence*, i. 432.

[2] *Auckland Correspondence*, ii. 284.

added, 'by this time all ideas of the Prince or any of us taking any measure in consequence of the good reports of the King are at an end; if they are not, pray do all you can to crush them.'[1]

The improvement, however, steadily continued. Dr. Willis came to town and informed the Chancellor that the King was too well for the Regency Bill to proceed, and Thurlow, after a long interview with the King, satisfied himself that the report was correct. On the 19th he announced in the House of Lords that the physicians had declared the King to be convalescent, and he proposed an adjournment. It would be impossible under these circumstances to press forward the Regency Bill, but a few days' interval was desirable in order to ascertain whether the recovery was fully established. On the 23rd the Prince of Wales and the Duke of York were at length permitted to visit the King, but only in the presence of the Queen, and no political conversation was allowed. On the 27th recovery was so complete that the bulletins were discontinued, and at last, on March 10, 1789, the session was formally opened by a speech from the throne, delivered by commission, announcing that the King had resumed his authority.

The conduct of the Prince of Wales and of the Duke of York during this crisis excited unbounded reprobation, and it appears to have been in some respects very scandalous, though I think that the accounts of it which are found in the letters on the ministerial side should be received with considerable scepticism. It was noticed that no other political contest of the generation had produced such fierce animosities or had so largely affected and divided social intercourse,[2] and many of the charges

[1] Fox's *Correspondence*, ii. 302.

[2] Lord Sidney wrote to Cornwallis: 'We have seen no times when it has been so necessary to

against the Princes were of the nature of social gossip, which, under such circumstances, is tolerably sure to be either untrue or over-coloured. In the first stage of the King's illness there does not appear to have been any just ground for censuring their conduct. They went to Windsor; they did not leave the palace during the King's residence there for a single day, and there is no sufficient reason to believe that they in any respect neglected him.[1] Their relations with the Queen were

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separate parties in private company. The acrimony is beyond anything you can conceive. The ladies are as usual at the head of all animosity, and are distinguished by caps, ribands, and other such ensigns of party.'—*Cornwallis Correspondence*, i. 406. General Grant, describing the beginning of the King's illness, says: 'Reports varied by the hour; party ran higher than was ever seen or heard of; it would hardly have been safe—certainly not pleasant—to bring men of different sides to meet at dinners at a third place, if such a neutral place could have been found in London.'—Ibid. p. 431.

[1] See the masterly paper in vindication of the Prince drawn up by Sir Gilbert Elliot—Fox's *Correspondence*, ii. 308–338. In a private letter Elliot says: 'The Prince is, I suspect, pretty sick of his long confinement at Windsor, and it is very natural he should be so, for, besides the scene before him, he has been under greater restraint in his behaviour and way of life than he has ever known since he was his own master. His residence, however, at Windsor has been useful in several ways. . . . It has given a favourable impression of the Prince's attention to his father, and has also prevented him from breaking out into any unseasonable indulgence of his spirits before the public, which might have happened if he had resided in London. The Duke of York has been constantly with him, and they have both conducted themselves in a most exemplary way.'—*Life of Sir G. Elliot*, i. 239, 240. Mr. Storer wrote to Eden, Nov. 14: 'It is universally agreed that the Prince of Wales has conducted himself with great propriety.'—*Auckland Corres.* ii. 242; and Lord Sheffield wrote: 'The Prince gains much credit by his conduct at Windsor.'—Ibid. ii. 244. There is nothing I think in Miss Burney's *Diary* inconsistent with this, and Miss Burney was at Windsor all the time of the Prince's residence. On the other hand, I have already quoted Grenville's story about the introduction of Lord Lothian into the King's chamber. In 1790 Walter, the founder of the *Times*, was imprisoned for sixteen months for libelling the Prince

already far from cordial, and there was a dispute on a question relating to the King's private property; but the conduct of the Prince of Wales was sanctioned by the Chancellor, and it does not appear to have been at all indefensible. The removal of the King to Kew took place at the request of the physicians and by the authority of a Cabinet Council, and from this time the care of the King's person passed wholly into the hands of the Queen. On the question of the regency, the Prince of Wales cannot be truly said to have acted with impatience or to have prematurely put forward his claims. There were not wanting counsellors who urged him to do so, but for some time he remained perfectly passive. Fox's assertion of the Prince's right to the regency was entirely unprompted, and the Duke of York was speedily authorised to declare in the House of Lords that the Prince of Wales had no wish or intention to put forward any claim of right, and that the King's sons and the King's brother earnestly desired that no such question should be raised. The conduct of Pitt towards the Prince, on the other hand, was from the first as haughty and unconciliatory as possible. It was said—and surely with some reason—that under the circumstances of the case the Prince of Wales ought to have been consulted about the intended measure, but no kind of confidence was given to him. He first learnt by a summons from the ministers that the Privy Council had been convened to examine the physicians about the state of his father's health, and the outlines of the regency plan were announced to Parliament before any communication had been made about them to the Prince.

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of Wales and the Duke of York—one of his statements being that the Duke of York had entered the King's chamber and purposely disturbed him during his illness; and Mrs. Harcourt asserts that this statement was perfectly true.—Mrs. Harcourt's *Diary*, p. 47.

In defiance of his expressed wish, Pitt insisted on bringing the question of the Prince's right to a formal issue, and obtaining a vote denying it. He declared before Parliament that the Prince of Wales had no more right to the regency during his father's incapacity than any other subject, and a number of restrictions were introduced which plainly indicated the distrust and hostility with which he was regarded.

Under these circumstances, it does not seem to me surprising that the Prince of Wales should have been drawn into a more distinctly political attitude, and if he had conducted himself with decorum and dignity I do not think that he would have been seriously blamed. But no sooner had he been released from the restraint of his attendance at Windsor than he relapsed into his old habits. Living among the most dissipated members of the Opposition, spending his nights in drinking, singing, and gambling, at a period which demanded the strictest retirement, openly attending meetings of the Opposition and exhibiting his partisanship without a shadow of disguise, he left, in the words of General Grenville, 'an impression on all sober-minded men' that could never be effaced.[1] It may not be true, as was stated in Government circles, that he exercised his talents of mimicry at Brooks's in imitating the frenzy of his father, but it is certain that a considerable section of Whig society dreaded nothing so much as the King's recovery, and that these men were the intimate associates of the King's son. The Duke of York, who was the favourite son of the King, was completely governed by the influence and example of his brother. Their

[1] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, i. 404. Numerous allusions to the conduct of the Prince will be found in the letters in the *Courts and Cabinets of Geo. III.*; in the *Auckland* and *Cornwallis Correspondence*; in Mrs. Harcourt's *Diary*; and in Wraxall's *Posthumous Memoirs*.

conduct when the King was recovering seemed equally bad. 'The truth is,' wrote Lord Bulkeley, 'that they are quite desperate, and drown their cares, disappointments, and internal chagrin in wine and dissipation.'[1] Grenville, writing confidentially to his brother, mentions that the Princes kept the King waiting for a considerable time on the occasion of their very first interview with him after his recovery; that they drove direct from that interview to the house of Mrs. Armitstead to communicate their impressions to Fox; and that they 'amused themselves' that very evening 'with spreading about a report that the King was still out of his mind, and quoting phrases of his to which they gave that turn.'[2]

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[1] *Courts and Cabinets of Geo. III.* ii. 122, 123.

[2] Ibid. ii. 126. Grenville adds: 'It is certainly a decent and becoming thing that when all the King's physicians, all his attendants, and his two principal ministers agree in pronouncing him well, his two sons should deny it. . . . I bless God it is yet some time before their *matured and ripened virtues* will be visited upon us in the form of a government.' Sir G. Elliot, on the other hand, after describing to his wife the interview of the 23rd, says: 'The King's mind is totally subdued and in a state of the greatest weakness and subjection. It is given out even by the Prince's friends that they observed nothing wrong or irrational in their visit, and it is material that they should not be thought to publish the contrary. It is not entirely true, however, as the King made several slips, one of which was that he told them he was the Chancellor. This circumstance, however, is not to be mentioned for the reasons just given.'—*Life of Sir G. Elliot*, i. 275. Elliot subsequently mentions the childish and unnatural manner of the King at two later interviews with the Duke of York.—Ibid. 277, 278. Lord Rawdon, writing on February 28, says: 'It is acknowledged that the King could not, without incurring great danger of relapse, for a considerable time apply himself to business, even supposing his present recovery to be as complete as is asserted, and to speak truly, I am very doubtful of it. That his mind is at present tranquil and clear upon ordinary subjects is without dispute; but the suspicion is that there are certain strings which will, whenever they are touched, produce false music again.'—*Cornwallis Correspondence*, i. 408.

The King had received his sons on the 23rd with cordiality and apparent affection, but the animosity which divided the royal family was intense. The Princes were constantly refused private interviews with the King, though several other persons enjoyed the favour. The King wrote a letter to the Duke of Clarence censuring their conduct, and when a concert was given at Windsor after the recovery, the Queen sent a messenger to inform them that though they might come if they pleased, it was right that they should know that the entertainment was intended for those who had supported the King and Queen on the late occasion. In May, some insulting words used by the Duke of York to Colonel Lennox led to a duel, in which the Duke very narrowly escaped, the bullet of his adversary having actually carried away one of his curls. It was observed that the challenge to the Duke was carried by Lord Winchilsea, who was a lord of the bedchamber and who still retained his post; that the Queen, on hearing of the escape of her son, did not utter a single word of interest or affection; and that she immediately after singled out his opponent for her special attention. A long memorial, vindicating the conduct of the Prince of Wales, was drawn up by Sir Gilbert Elliot and laid in the Prince's name before the King, and it was intended to accompany it by a letter composed by Burke, which was a bitter indictment against the conduct of the Queen. By the advice of some of the Whig leaders this letter was suppressed.[1]

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[1] See Fox's *Correspondence*, ii. 307–355; *Croker Papers*, i. 289, 290. 'One day last week,' writes Mr. Croker, 'talking with the Duke of Clarence about Mr. Burke's manifesto against the Queen after the regency . . . H.R.H. said that so much violence was a little inconsistent with Mr. B.'s conduct in a particular that regarded himself (the D. of C.) about the same time. H.R.H. was advised to apply for an increased allowance, and Mr.

The Opposition, like the Prince of Wales, suffered greatly in the public estimation during the crisis that has been related. In the mere matter of party management their inferiority was very marked. Had it not been for the delays that were produced by the discussion on the claim of rights, and by the additional and prolonged examination of the physicians on which the Opposition had insisted, the regency would certainly have been established before the recovery of the King. Without any necessity or any advantage, Fox had raised a question of abstract right which weakened him in every stage of the discussion and turned the whole stream of popular feeling against his party. The recovery of the King blasted his hopes of power, but it is not improbable that it saved his party from a still lower depth of degradation. It was universally acknowledged that the Prince of Wales had determined to dismiss an Administration which commanded great majorities in both Houses, which had of late suffered no single defeat, and which was almost certainly as popular in the country as in Parliament. After the reforms of the last few years, which had made Parliament a real representative of public feeling, such an attempt could have led to nothing but disaster and disgrace. The Whig leaders in accepting office would have shown themselves instigators and accomplices in a proceeding which was grossly unconstitutional, and they could have scarcely hoped to retain their power except by means that would have been ruinous to their characters. Their manifest

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Burke was selected to pen the demand. When he was writing the letter in the Duke's presence he stopped, and looking up at H.R.H. said, in his Irish accent and quick manner, "I vow to God, sir, I wish that, instead of writing letters of this kind you would go every morning and breakfast with your father and mother. It is not decent for any family, but above all the royal family, to be at variance as you all unhappily are."'—*Croker Papers*, i. 405.

readiness to accept office to the very last, and at a time when the King was rapidly recovering, was never forgiven. Irritation at the kind of proscription under which they had been suffering, and a strong disbelief in the reality of the King's recovery, entered largely into their motives, but the public attributed their conduct to the recklessness of desperate gamblers, to a desire to obtain the emoluments of office for themselves and their followers, to an unworthy animosity, and to a determination to deepen the chasm between Pitt and the Prince of Wales.

It is strange to think how easily at this time the attitudes of parties might have been not merely changed but inverted. If the Opposition had obtained office, and if the King had either died or become permanently insane, we might have found Fox attempting to maintain his power mainly by borough influence and by the influence and prerogative of the Crown, in opposition to the genuine course of public opinion, while Pitt might have stormed the Cabinet as the most brilliant and formidable champion of popular rights. Nor would Pitt in assuming such an attitude have been in any degree inconsistent with his past. To the end of his life he was accustomed among his friends to call himself a Whig, and up to the period of which I am now writing he had done nothing to forfeit his title to the name.

Fortune had been very kind to him; but, at the same time, the extraordinary skill and courage with which he had conducted his party through this difficult crisis was universally admitted, and nothing seemed wanting to his triumph. Vast as had been the hopes, splendid as had been the popularity that had surrounded the dawn of his ministry, there were as yet no signs of failing or of eclipse, and after five years of office he was at least as strong as at the beginning. He was strong,

with all the elements of political power—the confidence of the great trading classes, the enthusiastic devotion of the populace, the favour of the King, assured and compact majorities in both Houses, an Opposition more than ever broken and discredited. His parliamentary eloquence had taken a maturer tone. His experience had been enlarged, and there was as yet no evidence that power or popularity had affected the sobriety or the justice of his judgment. The King, at the first dawn of his recovery, had formed a prejudice against him, and he blamed the ministry for the introduction of a Regency Bill, but the impression soon wore off under the influence of Dr. Willis.[1] He wrote to Pitt in a strain of genuine and dignified gratitude, and he expressed his hope in one of his earliest interviews with him, that 'they were now united for the rest of his life, and that nothing but death should separate them.'[2]

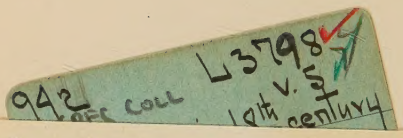
The popularity of the King himself was unbounded. All the clouds that gathered round him during the period of the influence of Bute and during the disasters of the American war had passed away, and it was impossible to mistake the earnestness or the spontaneity of the manifestations with which he was welcomed on his recovery. On the evening of the day on which he resumed his government, illuminations, unprompted by the Government or by the authorities, extended from Hampstead and Highgate to Clapham, and even as far as Tooting, and over the whole distance between Greenwich and Kensington; and it was especially noticed that the poorest cottages, the humblest stalls, contributed their farthing candles to the blaze. Similar scenes took place six weeks later, when the King went in state to St. Paul's to return thanks for his recovery; and they

[1] Mrs. Harcourt's *Diary*, pp. 6, 11, 12, 14, 24, 25.
[2] Ibid. p. 17.

extended to almost every town and village in the kingdom. It is probable that no English sovereign since the first days of the Restoration had enjoyed such a genuine, unforced popularity, and it is certain that no other sovereign of the House of Brunswick had ever approached it.

END OF THE FIFTH VOLUME.

Mgr. Field
2/1966



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